College President Responses to Student Activism on Campus

by

Amy P. Fulton

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(Higher Education)
in the University of Michigan
2021

Doctoral Committee:

Professor Michael N. Bastedo, Chair
Associate Professor, Cassie L. Barnhardt, The University of Iowa
Clinical Professor, John C. Burkhardt
Associate Professor, Donald J. Peurach
Assistant Professor, Awilda Rodriguez

Amy P. Fulton

apfulton@umich.edu

ORCID iD: 0000-0002-9933-9068

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the activists and leaders who work to make their campuses—and, in turn, society—better for educators, staff, students and their communities.

Acknowledgements

When I first started my PhD program at the University of Michigan, I felt as though I had left my job—something I was good at—for school, something that I felt like I was not very good at any longer. I now understand from my studies and commiseration with my cohort that a degree of imposter syndrome is normal and that our support systems, both at home and at school, are what help each of us get through our periods of self-doubt. Thanks to my colleagues, professors, and staff at Michigan, I gained confidence and skills after that first semester that have served me well in writing this dissertation. I first want to thank everyone in my cohort and at the Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education (CSHPE) for their friendship, encouragement, and knowledge shared over several courses and years. I have learned so much with and from each of you and I am excited to see what the future holds as we all aspire to improve and shape higher education in many ways.

I would also like to thank the faculty of CSHPE for sharing their wisdom, expertise and most of all, time, these past few years. Dr. Mike Bastedo, I have appreciated your efficient and effective advising over the years, particularly when it came to planning my program of study and working through Parts I and II of the Qualifying Paper. Dr. Awilda Rodriguez, my writing would not have improved to the point where I could have written a coherent and professional dissertation without your guidance. Dr. Lisa Lattuca, I learned so much about qualitative methods from your class and I learned about being a kind and accessible professor from your leadership. Dr. Steve DesJardins, you took time to reach out to me when I needed motivation and clarity in my second year, and you helped me work through additional quantitative skills that

have served me well, even though they are not an explicit part of this dissertation. And thanks to Melinda Richardson for your ongoing guidance, positive attitude, and quick response to my most random questions. Additionally, I am grateful to professors Dr. Jerry Davis, Dr. Wayne Baker, and Dr. Dave Mayer at the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan for helping me to better understand organizational theory and its application to higher education, through both qualitative research and development of explanatory mechanisms. Finally, I would like to thank the additional members of my committee, Dr. Don Peurach and Dr. Cassie Barnhardt. Thanks to each of you for serving on this committee and enriching my dissertation research with your knowledge, passion, wisdom, and overall enthusiasm and support for my research.

There is one place at the School of Education that I have felt like I belonged from day one, and that has been working with Dr. John Burkhardt at the National Forum on Higher Education for the Public Good on the New Leadership Academy. John has been an encouraging influence over my entire educational experience at Michigan, and has helped me to synthesize my personal, career, and academic selves while in this program. I have met amazing people through our leadership work and the New Leadership Academy, many of whom were instrumental in bringing together the participants for this study. My colleagues at the National Forum have supported me through my transition to being a new mom and continuing doctoral student, to becoming a PhD candidate who needed to maintain a focus on meeting my goals while fulfilling my passion for working with future and current leaders in higher education in the areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion. In particular, Dr. Betty Overton-Adkins and Ilana Israel have become more than my colleagues, but also my friends.

This dissertation would not have been possible without the network of higher education leadership development professionals and leaders aiding in my recruitment of participants.

Juggling emails and administrative assistants and “reply all” chains kept both me and my network busy with recruitment efforts and, for that, I am grateful. Dr. John Burkhardt, Dr. Betty Overton-Adkins, Dr. Joann Canales, Dr. Jaime Chahin and Dr. John Cavanaugh all put their reputations on the line and recommended my work to current and retired presidents they knew, urging them to participate in my research. Members of the CSHPE community both current and alumni lent their assistance as well, and I thank Jeff Grim, Dr. Jon McNaughtan and Dr. Dan Parrish for their recruitment assistance.

Finally, I left a truly meaningful job and purposeful workplace when I moved to Michigan to begin my doctoral program. Western Governors University (WGU) gave me my first job out of my master’s program at the University of Utah, and I worked there for seven wonderful years before realizing I needed further education to learn and grow into the leader I aspired to be. The president of WGU and my boss, Dr. Bob Mendenhall, taught me so much of what I learned about higher education and leadership. My mentor (and occasional boss) Dr. Chris Mallett shaped my perspective on higher education, management, and leadership at times when I needed it most. To my other colleagues and friends from WGU that helped mentor me, Bonnie Pattee, Mitsu Phillips, and Dr. David Leasure, your guidance and advice over the years has been invaluable; please don’t think that I have ever forgotten you. To my many other colleagues, coworkers, managers, and friends over the years at WGU, thank you for inspiring me to work harder to find ways to serve students, however possible. Finally, my former colleagues Scott Jenkins and Dr. Sally Johnstone helped me to recruit study participants when I reached out to them somewhat out of the blue, and their efforts helped expand the pool of participants.

To all of the participants in this study, who for reasons of anonymity cannot be named here, thank you so very much. Thank you also to their hard-working administrative assistants and

Chiefs of Staff who coordinated with me as interviews were set, documents were shared, and some rescheduling was necessary. As I mention numerous times throughout my dissertation, I know that college presidents are busy people. You gave me your time, your insights, and your trust by allowing me to interview you on this topic of higher education leadership and student movements. I hope that the result is something that can be useful to leaders as they navigate the challenging and increasingly political landscape of higher education in the twenty-first century. I also hope that this research benefits current and future student activists, who can discover more effective and impactful ways of engaging campus leadership to achieve the changes they envision for a more equitable campus and society.

And most of all, I am thankful for my family. My parents, Becky and Glen Fulton, you have always encouraged me to explore my interests and to achieve what I set forth as a goal for myself. You never stepped in to tell me what to do, but nurtured and supported me for my entire life, I love you. Plus, my mom helped immensely by transcribing interviews when I did not have the time or energy to complete transcriptions and keep on schedule. To my brother, Eric, who even helped me recruit a participant for this study! Your entrepreneurial and, frankly, unique spirit always lead me to think in unconventional ways about my own ideas and career path. My extended family has always cheered me on, and my uncle, Dr. Richard Fulton, also helped with a couple of recruits. I appreciate everyone who has kept tabs and checked in on my progress over the years. Finally, I am so very thankful for Eric, Tilly, Summer and Pippa. Eric, without you, I would never have had the confidence to drop the job I loved, move from the city I loved, and venture out with you to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. You have always made me feel loved and intelligent and I truly can't imagine this life without you. I also could never have earned a PhD while having, not one, not two, but *three* daughters over the course of my five-year

doctoral career! I am so relieved that I never have to slog through another paper while pregnant, or as a sleep-deprived new parent, again. You are all the loves of my life and I hope that I can make you proud by making the world a better place in my own, small way.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Appendices

Abstract

This dissertation explores presidents' perceptions and the various contexts and experiences that shape their responses to student activism. As a public symbol of the university to students, staff, and faculty as well as the surrounding community, college presidents have a unique role in addressing or (re)acting in response to student movements. However, prior research in student movements does not include the leadership perspective, and most literature operates on the assumption that presidents are an overarching oppositional force. This exclusion may be a result of lack of access to college presidents in higher education research; however, the result has been a conspicuous lack of research and understanding of the ways in which college presidents perceive student activism and choose to respond to student demands made of them. To address this oversight in student movement literature, this dissertation uses interview data from college presidents to determine and analyze their processes of evaluation, reflection, and decision-making regarding student activism. Relevant literature related to student movements, organizational theory, and college president literature is used to provide context for this research. In particular, I propose employing ideas related to organizational insiders and "tempered radicals" (Meyerson & Scully, 1995) as possible frameworks for understanding the decisions made by college presidents. Therefore, the overarching research question is: *How do college presidents approach interactions with student activists and what factors determine institutional responses to student activism?*

Presidents in this study served in their roles in the last fifteen years at four-year public or private institutions in the United States. Twenty-seven presidents participated and were from

institutions with different sizes, prestige, religious affiliations, geographic locations, and rural or urban locations and included minority-serving institutions. Presidents were interviewed from August 2019 through February 2020. Data analysis reveals that presidents generally perceive student activism on their campuses as positive, and believe that it promotes civic engagement, student learning and leadership, and benefits campus in that it is pushed to improve and continue on a path toward greater equity and inclusiveness. The few negative perceptions from presidents arose when they said that students had been manipulated by internal groups, such as faculty, or external groups unaffiliated and perhaps inappropriate for adoption on campus.

Presidents describe the importance of several limiting contextual factors in making decisions, including institutional contexts such as size, location, history of activism, institutional type (public or private) and student demographics. Additionally, external political factors are the most limiting for presidents when determining how to respond to student movements. The governing board of the institution and whether or not the state legislature is Republican-controlled are the most often cited external constraints. Interview data also suggests that presidents engage in normative responses (Schneiberg & Soule, 2005) when determining legitimacy of student tactics and mobilization efforts. Finally, presidents reveal their efforts to employ preventative tactics to pre-empt student movements on their campuses. While they view movements positively, the majority of presidents still work to avoid movements, especially those that are likely to employ disruptive tactics (which presidents often attempt to delegitimize). Presidents did this through building relationships with students, establishing and maintaining an on-campus presence, creation of clear policies around campus safety and free speech, and effective ongoing communication around progress related to prior resolutions between student activists and campus administrators.

Chapter 1 Introduction

College and university presidents routinely face ambiguity, contentious issues, and competing interests and constituencies, all while striving to maintain a commitment to the mission and purpose of their institutions. This leadership role has become more challenging with emergent issues of a changing student population, new technologies, greater demands of campus faculty and leadership, declining public support, and the need to navigate local, state, federal, and global political issues without losing sight of educational priorities. Given this dynamic environment, leaders, leadership, and leadership development must adapt to best serve the needs of today's college students and surrounding communities. In particular, contemporary campus leaders must be prepared to address concerns presented by students, and more specifically, student activists on campus. In the face of actual or perceived inaction, disinterest, or opposition by campus administration, students increasingly mobilize online (via social media platforms) and on campus to express their desires for change at their institutions. Demands are typically made of administrators or presidents, and the decision of how to respond to these demands has consequences for the students, campus climate, and the U.S. system of higher education. Yet many college presidents appear to be under- or unprepared to interact with student activists and may fall back on less-than-optimal approaches in attempts to maintain what they perceive to be a peaceful campus environment. On the other hand, some leaders seem to bring particular insight into maximizing student involvement, which can foster civic development while building an inclusive campus climate. Therefore, it is important to understand the various perspectives leaders may hold regarding interactions with student activists which could affect how presidents

approach resolutions. Differences in response may include factors such as leadership philosophies, personal narratives, campus environment, and general perception of student activism.

Higher education is often criticized for its bureaucratic structure, which can result in its slow pace of change (Birnbaum, 1988) and potentially lead to increased student frustration when concerns are not addressed in ways consistent with their timelines. However, there are unique opportunities for students to catalyze responses from leaders to address student grievances because of their insider status on campus. Due to the distinctive environment of higher education institutions and its relationship to various stakeholders, including students, the study of social movements in higher education warrants its own area of scholarship. Over the past century, student activism birthed some of the most fascinating and, at times, effective social movements in our country (Broadhurst, 2019). Studies show that in addition to prompting progress on campus, student movements have the potential to affect policy, culture, and social constructs outside of the university, resulting in a spillover effect (Rojas, 2011). For example, the student anti-sweatshop movement of the 1990s expanded from university students targeting collegiate apparel companies to greater national efforts to boycott companies, such as Nike, from employing sweatshop labor (Featherstone, 2002). Recent movements have also targeted numerous social issues, including: administrative handling of campus sexual assault cases (Sieben, 2011), racial bias on campus (Kurashige, 2014; Johnston, 2015; Kezar, Fries-Britt, Kurban, McGuire & Wheaton, 2018), free speech and controversial speakers on campus (Fuller & Mele, 2017), and restroom accessibility for transgender students (Kelderman, 2015). In addition to these examples, general trends of student activism on campus appear to be increasing. The 2016 Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at the University of California Los

Angeles (UCLA) annual survey results found that student interest in political and civic engagement at U.S. colleges and universities reached a fifty-year high (HERI, 2016). The percent of students who said they had a "very good chance" of participating in student protests while in college had increased to 8.5 percent in 2016 from 5.6 percent in the 2014 administration of the survey, further supporting observations of renewed student activism on college campuses across the nation.

Colleges and universities are distinctive sites of contention and the educational nature of colleges and universities has the potential to foster or encourage activist expression (Broadhurst, 2014). However, the actions of presidents, faculty, and administrators can facilitate or inhibit student feedback and expression, depending on the institutional and environmental contexts and their own experiences, biases, or leadership approach to campus dissent. Additionally, while the missions of the institutions are clear, the ways in which the mission is carried out can vary widely by department or campus unit. This organizational structure is described by Weick (1976) as loosely coupled, in which units of an organization are united under an organization and mission, but are differed in their approaches, responsibilities and goals. Loose coupling accounts for the oft-cited "silo effect" felt especially on large campuses. It can also protect various units from mismanagement or misconduct in other areas of campus. One consequence of such a structure is that the organization may not be clear on the execution of its mission, and to students, may appear that the college or university is failing to meet its commitments. When students perceive that these commitments are not upheld, or that the institution is lacking in direction on an issue, they may work in a group to voice concerns and advocate for change (Linder et al., 2020).

Another explanation for student activism is the influence of external political and social environments on campus climate, although even in these cases, the approaches to collective action by students reflect their insider roles and relationships to the university. Compared to non-student activists, student activists typically have access to unique resources and opportunities, specifically in terms of time and social networks (Altbach, 1989; Astin, Astin, Bayer & Bisconti, 1975). Student activists may also experience pressure to move quickly due to the school year schedule (Altbach, 1989). The relationship between student activists and campus leaders is also unique to higher education. Colleges and universities, by definition, are interested in providing an environment that enhances student social development, including civic engagement (Hamrick, 1998; Barnhardt, 2015). Therefore, while student activists may, at times, be antagonistic to college administrators, the overall engagement of students on campus increases student learning and potential future political participation (Hamrick, 1998). Colleges and universities also benefit from the labor of student activists, which can result in an improved campus climate through changes in practices, policies, or programs.

While they may not always deal directly with student activists or play key roles in implementing changes, college presidents are the voice and face of an institution, and as such, are responsible for public responses to student movements. Leadership decisions also affect the outcomes of student movements and have the potential to create new political opportunity structures, introduce compromise, negatively or positively affect campus outcomes, or successfully repress the student movement. Whether justified or not, the president is often frequently pressured to take a public stance on student activist demands and is held responsible for resolution of student movement issues. In recent years, college presidents in extreme cases have been forced to step down at increasing rates, in large part due to their handling—positive or

negative—of controversial campus issues expressed through student activism. One study of 25 years of records dealing with presidential exits from universities found a substantial uptick in involuntary president departures (most unrelated to the economy), beginning in 2007, some related to responses to student demands (Rutherford & Lozano, 2016).

In consultation with their administration and with regards to other contextual constraints, presidents make the final decision regarding student movement demands. James Duderstadt, President of University of Michigan from 1988 to 1996, reflects on the presidential role in responding to student activism:

> Student protests can distract the attention of the institution and the president from other, more compelling priorities, such as achieving academic excellence. They can dominate the local headlines and occasionally trigger strong political responses, sometimes favoring student issues, sometimes opposing them. Student protests can also catch the attention of the university's governing board. Hence, like it or not, a university president frequently becomes the point person in dealing with student protests (2007, p. 250).

In addition to Duderstadt's observation of the nexus of decision-making lying with the president, college presidents act as symbols of their institutions internally and externally. In fact, one of the only comprehensive longitudinal studies on college presidents concluded that the greatest contribution of the college president is the symbolic value to the organization as a historical, cultural, and uniting force (Birnbaum, Bensimon, & Neumann, 1989). Therefore, the president is the key representative of the college regarding university responses (verbal, printed, and action-oriented) to student movements.

Additionally, with each measured response to student protest demands, college presidents have an opportunity to create a more inclusive campus environment. Many contemporary student movements are related to diversity, equity, and inclusion issues such racial bias incidents (Cole & Harper, 2017), LGBTQ campus policies (Coley, 2018), or sexual assault (Sieben, 2011). Therefore, presidential responses carry enormous weight in shaping campus climate for student

activists and non-activists alike. Presidents also have the opportunity to decenter historically inequitable narratives present at predominantly white institutions (PWI) through their responses to student activists (Hoffman & Mitchell, 2016; Kezar et al. 2018). In one case study, the president's response to minoritized student activists on campus reinforced the power differential between the president's position and that of the students, placing the responsibility of institutional change in the laps of the students (Hoffman & Mitchell, 2016). In this case, students reacted with frustration at having been dismissed by leadership and the president missed an opportunity to create a more inclusive campus environment. Finally, historically marginalized student groups are often asked to take on additional emotional labor and time commitments as part of the outcomes of their demands. On the one hand, opportunities for student leadership development are included with this labor; on the other, students who are already experiencing racism or other challenging experiences on campus become tasked with their resolution.

Although leaders play key roles in determining a movement's success or suppression, a comprehensive review of student movement literature reveals that university leadership is hardly mentioned. Instead, student movement scholars have used case studies, interviews, discourse analysis, archival research, and survey methods to explore areas such as: characteristics of student activists (Boren, 2001; Trent & Craise, 1967; Lipset, 1971), campus trends (Bayer & Astin, 1969; Altbach, 1989; Van Dyke, 1998), tactics of student movement actors (Soule, 1997; Rhoads, 1998; Binder & Wood, 2013), or student learning outcomes and civic engagement (Barnhardt, 2015; Rosas, 2010). One study by Ropers-Huilman, Carwile, and Barnett (2005) examined student activists' perceptions of campus administration and proposed different ways in which student activists characterize administrators. While four different types were proposed (gatekeepers in the system, antagonists and enemies, supporters, or absentee leaders), "the

majority of student activists in our study experienced their relationships with administrators, at least in part, as antagonistic" (p. 305). Another perspective is proposed by Lammers (1977), through his typology outlining college authorities and their interactions with student activists. Based upon his observations of student activism during the civil rights era, Lammers identifies four possible approaches by leadership: fight off, stand off, buy off and join in. Operationalization of this typology could provide greater understanding of the interactions between presidents and student activists; however, additional information about campus culture, environment, and historical context must complement these classifications. Other than Ropers-Huilman and colleagues (2005), Lammers (1977), and some very recent scholarship (Barnhardt, 2019; Cho, 2018), scholars have historically expressed little research interest in this area. Specifically, the perspective of the president is overlooked in favor of exploring the perceptions of leadership by activists. This exclusion may simply be due to a lack of access to college presidents for these types of studies. However, the result has been a conspicuous lack of theory concerning "the conditions under which administrators will resort to repression or concession to join with activists" (Rojas, 2011, p. 271). To address this oversight in student movement literature, the purpose of this dissertation is to use interview data of college presidents to determine and analyze their processes of evaluation, reflection, and decision-making regarding student activism.

Research Questions

In this dissertation, I sought to understand the nature of the relationship between student activists and campus administration, as represented by the college or university president. As a symbol of the university to both students, staff, and faculty as well as the local community, college presidents have a unique role in addressing or (re)acting in response to student

movements. In their study of movements inside organizations, Zald and Berger (1978) note that, "the response of authorities to mass movements is affected by the goals and tactics of the movement, the autonomy of the organizational authorities, and their own ideological predisposition" (p. 847). Building upon this idea, this dissertation will explore the decision-making process of college presidents in evaluating the student activists' issue and tactics; weighing institutional policies, contexts, constraints, and values; determining a course of action; and the steps taken to follow through on the course of action. As a result, this study will provide helpful, empirically based insights for college presidents who wish to evaluate and improve their response strategies, campus climate, and relationships with student activists. Findings from this dissertation will also help student activists aspiring to gain the attention and support of campus leadership through constructive interactions. With these goals in mind, the overarching research question is: *How do college presidents approach interactions with student activists and what factors determine institutional responses to student activism?* Additionally, given the research question, body of literature, and theoretical frameworks I propose the following sub-questions:

1. What role does a president's view of student activism play in their perceptions of student activists and how they decide to handle student protests?
2. What student movement tactics garner the attention of campus leadership?
3. What external social contexts, such as political climate, town-gown relations, or current events, inform presidential decision-making regarding student movements?
4. What institutional contexts inform presidential decision-making regarding student movements?
5. What personal narratives, values, or experiences guide presidential decisions to either support, ignore, or repress student movements?
6. How might presidents attempt to create a more inclusive campus environment through their responses to student protests?

To study these relationships, contexts, outcomes, and decision-making processes, I interviewed current and emeritus college presidents who held a presidential role during the last fifteen years.

Where possible, I chose presidents who had experienced two documented student movements on campus. This comparison of two student movements was helpful for a few reasons: 1) offered comparison of student tactics and presidential responses; 2) assisted with anonymity in reporting data by including multiple incidents; 3) generated richer data by asking respondents to compare and contrast their responses. However, in order to recruit a larger sample for this study, I allowed for some presidents who had not experienced large-scale student movements on their campuses. This only happened in less than five cases, all of which were religiously affiliated or rural institutions. Interview data was supplemented by publicly available data such as student newspapers, national newspapers, and press releases on specific student movements, institutions, and presidential responses to inform my approach to each interview and corroborate interview data.

Chapter 2 Review of Literature

Three main bodies of literature inform this research: social movement theory and student movements, organizational theory, and research on college presidents. First, I provide a foundation of social movement theory as it applies to student movements as well as brief historical context for student movements. Next, I propose using organizational theory specific to the study of organizational insiders and "tempered radicals" as theoretical frameworks to understand motivations behind presidential interactions and decisions related to student movements. Third, I review the body of literature that covers the college presidency, which includes previous studies on college presidents and also representations of student movements in college president memoirs. Finally, I propose how utilizing these bodies of literature can help to draw some conclusions about how college presidents may be operating within their organizations related to student movement responses and why they may be responding to student activism with certain tactics, processes, or approaches.

Social Movement Theory and Student Movements

Social movement theory explains when, why, and how people mobilize around an issue to effect change. Over the years, scholars from various schools of thought have applied their disciplinary approaches to understanding social movement participants, tactics, targeted organizations or groups, and outcomes of social movement activity. This diverse set of research interests has resulted in a rich body of knowledge surrounding social movements. This dissertation study will employ several theoretical underpinnings from social movement theory to

understand student movements and student organizing on campus. For this reason, it is helpful for the research to utilize social movement theory as a foundation for forming research questions and interview questions. The following section describes basic tenets of social movement theory, highlights the most pertinent scholarship on social movements, and provides historical context and relevant scholarship on student movements.

Social Movement Theory

This section will first present the foundational concepts of social movement theory, including a short history of the evolution of social movement theory. As one might expect, organizing and theoretical explanations have evolved with new movements and understandings of how and why people organize. Following the general theoretical background of social movement theory, I will narrow the focus to a few concepts within social movement theory that are relevant to this study on college president responses to student movements. First, I will track the evolution of social movement theory from grievance and deprivation (Gurr, 1970) models of collective action to resource mobilization (McCarthy & Zald, 1977), noting how each may apply to student movements. Next, student movement literature and its evolution, including contemporary research will be examined, followed by literature related to presidential responses. I then delve into relevant organizational theory that will support interpretation and analysis of presidential responses. Finally, relevant literature on college presidents and their roles will provide a foundation for understanding the profession and its influence on higher education institutions.

Social movement theory emerged to explain collective action in the face of oppositional structures and is used to explain how and why ordinary citizens respond to repression through collective action, mobilization, organization, and solidarity at times of political opportunity

(Tilly, 1978; Tarrow, 1994; Snow & Soule, 2010). Social movement theory encompasses the activities, objectives, and methods used in collective action. McCarthy & Zald (1977) define social movements as the "mobilization of sentiments in which people take actions to achieve change in the social structure and the allocation of value" (p. 248). Social movements can also be defined as contentious collective action in the face of interactions with elites, opponents, and authorities (Snow & Soule, 2010), which is of particular interest to this dissertation research. In higher education, the authorities or elites often in opposition to students are often the president as representative of the administration or board of trustees (Lammers, 1977; Ropers-Huilman et al., 2005). According to Snow and Soule (2010), social movements can be understood and analyzed in several parts based upon the various players involved. Attention can be given to the group of people who mobilize to bring about change; the authorities, organization, or group that the group seeks to influence; the tactics used by the social movement; and the desired outcome or demands by the group.

The people in the social movement group are mobilized by a combination of motivations, networks, or resources (explored further below) and make demands of those in power, typically opposing the group that traditionally influences those in power, referred to as the "polity" by social movement scholars (McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Useem, 1981). Social movements are defined by five key elements: they challenge or defend structures of authority, are collective efforts, act outside of existing organization structures, the movement itself is organized, and the movement has a level of continuity (Snow & Soule, 2010). On the other side of the spectrum and far from being temporary moments of action, existing special interest or lobbying groups are also not considered social movements. This is because social movements must emerge in response to issues, not adapt missions and activities of an existing organization. These organizations have

become absorbed into the system and have ongoing financial resources, membership, government relationships, and other resources (Piven & Cloward, 1979). Once organizations become part of the existing structure or polity, they are no longer a social movement in opposition to such structure (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). Thus, social movements must be collective action that arises in reaction to authorities and find a common purpose, solidarity, and sustained action to achieve their goals. This dissertation will primarily employ examples of student movements; however, other instances of student dissent or mobilization will be referenced as examples in literature or provided by campus presidents in interviews.

It is only through persistent collective action against the opposition that a single encounter becomes a social movement (Tarrow, 1994). Therefore, social movements and their activities are different from those of crowds, mobs, organizations, associations, or special interest groups. Crowds or demonstrations alone are not sufficient to constitute a social movement but are instead a disruptive tactic used by social movement groups to raise awareness of their issues. Additionally, participants in a mob or riot are typically only committed in temporary solidarity, although these events may indicate that a movement is in the process of forming. Protests alone do not constitute a social movement; rather, protests are a tactic used by movement groups to pressure authorities to meet the activists demands. Because social movements act outside of established political or organizational channels, protests and other unconventional tactics are used to garner attention or gain access to those in power who can make change (McAdam & Scott, 2005). In the instance that such a single contentious episode is successfully isolated or repressed, then authorities will quickly discount the disruption and not address concerns. Therefore, sustained organization is necessary for social movements.

Scholars in sociology, psychology, political science, organizational theory, and education have studied collective action using discipline-specific theories and approaches over the years, often seeking to understand movement participants. Through this cross-disciplinary study, two main theories emerged to explain the mobilization of movement participants: 1) grievance and relative deprivation (Gurr, 1970); and 2) resource mobilization theory (McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Tilly, 1978). Relative deprivation theory was popular during the 1960s civil rights era, and its theorists posited that the more individuals unfavorably compare their situation to the situation of others, the greater the likelihood of their joining social movements (Gurr, 1970; Turner & Killian, 1972). These dissatisfied or disadvantaged groups with limited access to political power then develop grievances, attempt to enlarge access to certain opportunities, and may mobilize group members into social movements. Grievance and relative deprivation models explain why historically marginalized student groups may be the most active in making demands for change, postulating that when out-groups compare to those groups in power and find differential benefits, that group will mobilize to demand change. Graduate student unions have organized to demand benefits or fair wages in comparison to junior faculty when graduate students have compared their compensation (Rhoades & Rhoads, 2003). Such an example could be considered as grievance and relative deprivation as the organizing members of the group are directly aggrieved and will directly benefit from the movement's success. This may not explain the motivations of all such movements; for example, graduate students at the University of Michigan went on strike in the fall of 2020 demanding additional safety precautions regarding the recent Covid-19 pandemic in addition to flexibility regarding childcare benefits and coverage (Ruberg, 2020). While all unionized graduate students would benefit from enhanced safety assurances, only a portion were concerned with childcare costs. However, students mobilized and made demands

for others when they themselves were not directly deprived of a benefit. Zald (1987) agreed that relative deprivation theory did not account for activist members who are not part of identity-based groups and does not specify how people select which outgroup they use for comparison. He also critiqued relative deprivation theory because mobilization comes with costs to participants, stating that "relative deprivation theory ignored the costs of participation, focusing centrally on grievances" (p.11). Thus, in the 1960s and 1970s, organizational theory scholars interested in social movements began to develop new theories, like resource mobilization, to expand upon the existing grievance and deprivation models. This expansion of understanding is especially applicable to student movements, where students may organize in favor of their own interests or instead on behalf of others. Student activists such as those that organized against the use of sweatshop labor in the manufacturing of university apparel were not the ones directly harmed by unfair labor practices (Featherstone, 2002). Rather, these students were organizing on behalf of another identity-based group of which they were not members.

Social movement scholars proposed resource mobilization theory to explain various factors in collective action mobilization and participation (McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Tilly, 1978). For example, students organized in efforts to gain commitments from their institutions for fair wages for campus workers (Dixon, Tope & Van Dyke, 2008). In such a movement, students are not organizing for themselves as the aggrieved population. Rather, they recognize that they have the available time and positional power (as students that the institution would be more likely to respond to) than workers. In resource mobilization theory, the lack of aggrievement or deprivation by the social movement actors, such as students, is explained by the students' availability and employment of resources needed to organize. Additionally, resource mobilization theory accounts for organizational structures and processes and how they may

constrain or support social movements in organizations—of particular interest in this study, where all presidents are a part of an individual institution that interacts within a system of higher education and other external social and political forces (Snow & Soule, 2010). The theory also explains movement participants and organization efforts through the lens of individual and organizational resources that are deployed in social movement efforts (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). Resource mobilization theorists describe social movement participants as political strategists who assess opportunities for the movement and use the resources available to them (time, pre-existing organization, media) for political gains (McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Tilly, 1978). In this model, McCarthy and Zald (1977) proposed moving grievances and deprivation to a less central role in motivating movement participation, making them a component of collective action but not the central motivating factor. As summarized by Gamson (1968), "what is important about people is not their sentiments or meaning they give to the world but whether they have discretionary money and time to give to a social movement" (p. 7). Critical resources are necessary for collective action, and these resources may not entirely lie with the aggrieved population. Thus, resource mobilization theory explains why college students at elite schools mobilize on behalf of social movements not directly related to their own constituency group: they have a lot of both time and money. Critics of the resource mobilization paradigm point to a lack of values, grievances, ideology and collective identity used to understand collective action (McCarthy & Zald, 1977).

Grievance and relative deprivation theory and resource mobilization theory each contribute to a greater understanding of student movements. Student movement literature has historically focused on the activism of students with the resources available to mobilize, such as in the cases of the anti-sweatshop (Featherstone, 2002) or South African divestment movements

(Soule, 1997). Research has also shown that when compared to other institutional characteristics, prestige is considered the most consistent predictor of campus protest events when examined across student social movement research (Hodgkinson, 1970; Dixon et al., 2008). This is because students at selective institutions generally have more resources to draw upon for social movement activity, including time, elite networks, and finances. Aside from personal resources, students at prestigious institutions benefit from a prestigious institution's access to larger endowments (Soule, 1997), which better fund student organizations and activities (Van Dyke, 1998).

Scholars have also analyzed the collective action of minoritized groups of students, particularly those who share a collective identity, such as in the cases of LGBTQ curriculum and multicultural education (Rhoads, 1998). Recent case studies of activism surrounding racial bias incidents also shed light on activism by identity groups on campus (Kezar et al., 2018; Linder et al., 2020). New approaches to the study of social movements suggest using both theories to aid in understanding social movement mobilization.

Student Movements

Student movements have historically reflected and, at times, amplified tones of activism and discontent in society. Many broader social movements originate and gain momentum in higher education settings (Snow & Soule, 2010; Rojas, 2011), and a subset of these movements directly challenge the institutions themselves. The movement can be externally sourced (Lounsbury, 2001) or can be defined by the students (Rojas, 2007), faculty (Moore, 2008), or institution directly affected (Frickel & Gross, 2005). Over the past century, students on campuses across the United States have organized movements to make demands of their campus administrations. Student movements have the potential to impact areas like university structures,

policies, campus climate, or programs, and also act as a seedbed for activism in broader social concerns. Student activism has generated institutional changes such as: curricular changes (Rhoads, 1998; Rojas, 2011; Arthur, 2011), race conscious admissions, anti-discrimination policies (Rhoads, 1998), or other institutional changes in policy (Bayer & Astin, 1969; Altbach, 1990). Further, movements can affect more than just the issue at hand: culture, counter movements, higher education policies, organizational phenomena, or the activists themselves are potentially influenced by student movement activity. For example, studies of student activists have shown a lifelong effect on their personal lives in terms of relationships, career choice, and continued activism (Altbach, 1989). This is likely because through support of student activism, colleges and universities can also foster greater learning (Hamrick, 1998). Indeed, one recent study found coursework affected the likelihood of campus student activism, which in turn led to greater civic learning (Barnhardt, 2015). And at University of California at Berkeley, where student activism has become a part of the university culture (Lee et al., 2004), student organizing is considered a learning outcome for UC Berkeley graduates.

Student movement research analyzes how movements have originated, evolved, and influenced systemic change in higher education. Sociologists seeking to explain student activism have analyzed broader social trends, which often vacillate between radical right or left political ideologies (Lipset, 1971). Though often associated with progressive values and movements, student movements can be employed to advance conservative, restrictive, or oppressive ideologies, practices, and policies that may disproportionately affect one group of people over another (Munson, 2010; Teles, 2008; Binder & Wood, 2013). Traditionally, college campuses have been viewed as sites of liberal activism, and this view is often reflected in sentiments expressed by students, faculty and in mainstream media. This notion has come about because of

the highly publicized historical activism taking place to advocate for progressive values through policy and curricular reform on campus. However, recently scholarly work uncovers student movements on campus in direct opposition to progressive movements, sometimes formed as counter movements (Meyer & Staggenborg, 1996; Snow & Soule, 2010) and others formed to address traditionally conservative issues (Munson, 2010; Binder & Wood, 2013).

Tactics used by activists are integral to the movement's success and can sometimes be so creative that a movement can become known more for the tactics rather than the goals (Wilson, 1973). Student activists employ a variety of tactics in their attempts to influence campus administrators (Barnhardt, 2014). Tactics are the strategies or actions that activists use to express their message which can include demonstrations or protests, petitioning, or written demands. While it has become more common for a number of student movements to leverage social media in their tactical repertoire, many are still using long-practiced tactics such as marches, teach-ins, sit-ins, and street theater (Broadhurst, 2014). Tarrow (1998) offers general categories for tactics, which can be either conventional, disruptive, violent or some combination of all three. Conventional tactics fall within accepted processes for expressing dissent, such as students distributing materials in a free speech zone or speaking at a board meeting on behalf of their cause. Disruptive tactics are not necessarily violent, but can disrupt the normal operations of campus life, as documented by Astin (1975). Disruptive tactics encompass such campus examples as a die-in, sit-in, march, or rally. The aim is that this tactic "breaks the routine, startles bystanders, and leaves elites disoriented" (Tarrow, 1998, p. 104). Creativity in disruptive tactics may garner greater attention by students, presidents, college newspapers, or social media. Finally, violent tactics are most typically used when prior attempts to garner sufficient attention have failed (Tarrow, 1998). Violence that is commonly associated with crowd or mob disruption

can backfire on activists. In such cases, rather than gaining sympathizers, a protest event can polarize an issue, decrease uncertainty, and give opponents the opportunity to repress the violence with public backing (Tarrow, 1994). In Gibson's (1989) study of political repression of colleges during the Vietnam era, he concluded that statutes adopted by states to repress campus dissent were "a direct response to the level of disruption on campus" (p. 13). Therefore, disruptive tactics may encourage greater repression by leadership or governing bodies in part to appease public pressure. This focus on tactics by the public or those holding positions of authority can distract from the movement's original goals and result in valid movement issues going unaddressed.

Choices of tactics and strategies, or, referred to in social movement literature as "repertoires of contention" (Tilly, 1978; Tarrow, 1998), and the intensity of tactics are decisions made by movement groups based upon grievances, availability of resources, and political opportunities. The choice of tactics used by students vary based upon the student group, campus leader, institution, historical contexts, and past interactions between the administration and the student group. From a resource mobilization perspective, the use of tactics is largely dependent upon the resources available to the movement group within the organization, as well as the availability of continuous resources for the movement group (Zald & Berger, 1978). For example, university students may struggle to maintain student participation in a movement, given the traditional school calendar, which includes holiday and summer breaks. As mentioned earlier, students may also have greater amounts of time for participation in movements, yielding tactics that demand greater commitments of time and energy from participants. The tactical choices made by student activists and overall application of tactical intensity (conventional, disruptive, or violent) shape the responses of campus presidents.

Inherent in discussion of collective mobilization and tactics are the roles occupied by the activist group and the authorities against which they are organizing (Snow & Soule, 2010). The power dynamics between social movement participants (students) and the authority figures or "elites" (college presidents) in this study possess similar relationships of those in and out of power in other social movements. In particular, those in positions of power grant student movements legitimacy is derived from cultural values or norms (Gibson, 2008). Findings from Gibson's study concluded that "restraints on freedom are not exclusively or perhaps even primarily from the government…expectations and norms widespread in the culture can inhibit free expression" (p. 98). This is applicable to student activists wishing to express demands that may not be approved by normative cultural values or modes of expression and also to presidents who may seek to disrupt acceptable responses to student demands. For example, perhaps leadership is discouraged from potentially incentivizing future student activism through "caving" to their demands. Presidents may also be discouraged from taking a perceived "political" stance that runs counter to state cultural or political norms, or from disrupting traditionally valued metrics of institutional excellence, such as Nancy Cantor did at Syracuse when she prioritized increased diversity and community connections at the expense of U.S. News and World Report rankings (Wilson, 2011), which are considered a normative representation of institutional quality and prestige (although these metrics are somewhat flawed, see Bowman & Bastedo, 2010).

Authorities or policy-making elites (a group into which presidents could be grouped) tend to prefer professionalized or institutionalized social movement organizations. However, student movement groups may have to sacrifice radical agendas to gain legitimacy. For example, Jenkins and Eckert (1986) examined the bureaucratization of indigenous social movement groups into: 1) institutionalized forms of activism; 2) "channeling" or co-optation of the movement. They

concluded that such approaches to gaining legitimacy can be detrimental to the movement because the integration of professionalized social movement organizations coincided with the decline in the movement activity and progress (Jenkins & Eckert, 1986).

Leadership Responses to Student Movements

While many researchers in the field have called for further research into the relationship between activists and leadership, little has been published on this "important and much neglected topic" (McCarthy and Zald, 1977, p. 248). Rather, administrative repression is commonly assumed in student movement literature since the existing authority structure is assumed to be in a position of opposition to student activists, despite there being little empirical evidence that this is the case. Research also suggests that campus leaders have little opportunity to interact with students until a crisis arises, perhaps influencing student perceptions of campus administration (Ropers-Huilman, et. al, 2005).

A few studies of student activists illuminate their experiences with administrators and, at times, campus presidents. For example, one study concluded that the majority of student activists perceived campus administration to be antagonistic to their cause (Ropers-Huilman et al., 2005). Students in this study "often interpreted the oppositions they experienced in their relations with administrators as representative of administrators' desire to disempower students through ignoring them or keeping crucial info from them" (p. 303). Additionally, students in the study were also frustrated by the unwillingness of administrators to listen or even respond to their demands. In a recent rhetorical analysis case study of administrative responses, the authors concluded that the administration (including the president) sought to appease students through meaningless statements on diversity without concrete action or accountability (Hoffman & Mitchell, 2016). In contrast, there are also situations where administrators joined student

movements or at least supported them through other measures. During protests at University of Missouri, the football coach supported the players' decision to protest the president's handling of issues of racism on campus (Kelderman, 2015). In other cases, campus leaders may even remain neutral, refusing to support or condemn student actions. While no concrete explanations are offered in the literature, it may be that campus leaders perceive neutrality to be the best approach to maintaining what they observe to be a peaceful campus. Presidents also may be hesitant to respond and perhaps make matters worse, which could fuel student activists by creating a political opportunity for their cause. In fact, social movement scholars recognize that one of the important dimensions of political opportunity structures is the degree to which authorities are willing to use repression against challenges (McAdam & Scott, 2005; Tarrow, 1996). As Altbach (1989) points out when discussing repression of student movements in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s, "while there has been no tabulation of the impact of repression of student movements, it seems just as likely to stimulate further protest as to end demonstrations. Nonetheless, severe and sustained repression can usually bring a specific student activist movement to an end" (p. 101). He describes how such violence or repression is a response commonly invoked in third-world countries, as the United States government would generally ignore such student activism, dismissing it as a nonlegitimate form of political organizing. However, the violent responses employed by university leadership and the United States government during the Civil Rights era heavily employed repressive and potentially violent tactics (Altbach, 1989).

Public presidential responses are perhaps the best indicator, thus far, to provide insights into their decision-making process. In their studies of presidential rhetoric, Cole (2018) and Cole and Harper (2017) conclude that the public responses of presidents to racial bias incidents offer

insights into the institutional and systemic treatment of such incidents. They find that the various environmental contexts figure heavily into presidential responses, stating that “there are many layers to evaluating race and racism on campus, and presidents have varying social standing based on the constituency (e.g. students, faculty). For where one president may be championed as a positive influence on addressing issues of race another could be under scrutiny for not addressing those same issues" (Cole & Harper, 2017, p. 329). In fact, a recent report from the American Council on Education (ACE) highlights the importance of leadership in responding to campus racial crisis through specific strategies of diversity, equity, and inclusion (Kezar et al., 2018). Although their study focuses on racial bias incidents affecting students, similar constraints and considerations are present in all student movements, a significant number of which are related to racism and campus climate issues. Cole and Harper (2017) also found that of presidential responses to racial incidents on 18 campuses from 2012-2015, presidents were most likely to mention racial bias incidents in broad terms, while rarely addressing the systemic structures of inequity that foster continued incidents. This is evident in that only 4 of the 18 presidents in the study publicly mentioned the incidents in detail. Additionally, in his case study on UCLA’s Chancellor Murphy, Cole (2018) highlighted the importance of college presidents and their responses to student protest during the Civil Rights Era, providing evidence that this overlooked group of leaders warrants further study.

Lammers (1977), is the sole researcher in the past half-century to propose a typology of tactics and strategies that could be used by university authorities in response to student opposition. However, as posited by Barnhardt (2019) the typology developed by Lammers can be used to categorize leadership reactions but has not been empirically tested. In his research, Lammers recognized that university officials in the 1960s were ill-equipped to respond to student

activism, lacking the experience and university policies to guide their responses. This lack of preparation left the door open to "variations in tactics resulting from personality variables" (Lammers, 1977, p. 172), in addition to the typical "decision-making machinery" of the institution and the general power structure of higher education. These variations offer an opportunity to study unique organizational phenomena in terms of how college presidents act in opposition to student activism; an opportunity that was available following the height of activism in the 1960s and still relevant today. In response to the dearth of research in this area, Lammers (1977) developed a typology of four tactics used by university leadership in response to student activism: fight off, stand off, buy-off, and join in. Approaches defending the power of the university are "fight off" in which the authorities apply negative sanctions, disciplinary action, or repression, and "stand off" (Light, 1977) in which authorities attempt to wait out or wear out protestors. The tactics of "buy off" consist of negotiation with the student protestors including positive sanctions or concessions, and "join in" is aimed at cooperation or sharing power with the activists.

Similar to social movement literature generally, repression of student activism tends to be the typical documented response of university authorities toward the student opposition, resulting in attempted repression of student movement activity. This can take the form of sanctions placed upon students or their campus allies, increased security without coordination of student activists, or organized efforts to stifle activist communications, activities, meeting spaces, or campus resources. There have been extensive studies of repression by the state in social movements, as repression is the typical response from government in the face of contentious collective action (Davenport, 2007). In higher education, repression of students has been shown to be somewhat risky for leaders, as it can lead to new political opportunities for the movement. It also may be

unwise to repress students who are organizational insiders and paying customers of the university.

Organized disruptions and instability by activists to those in power can undermine the status quo and influence the chances of a successful insurgency (McAdam, 1982). For example, in his study of corporate boycotts, King (2008) found that targets of boycotts were more likely to concede when the boycott threatened their public image, which was amplified in the presence of media coverage. For colleges and universities, negative press surrounding repression of a student movement could result in drawing greater media attention, and greater reputational threat (King, 2008). To activists, this attention and reputational threat may create a political opportunity, resulting in a greater likelihood of concession to demands by the administration. Scholars have written that one of the important dimensions of political opportunity structures is the degree to which authorities are willing to use repression against challengers, which influences protestors who, encountering repression, may mobilize in greater collective action efforts (McAdam & Scott, 2005; Tarrow, 1994). A well-known and extreme example of repression is the May 4, 1970, shooting incident of unarmed college students protesting the Vietnam War at Kent State University. The deaths of four students and injuries to nine others resulted in greater political opportunity for anti-Vietnam protestors, spurring an eruption of campus protests that totaled more than 1,250 across the United States (Porta & Reiter, 1998).

The "stand off" approach was originally proposed by Light (1977) in his study of the University of Chicago in 1966. University leadership who utilize stand off tactics refuse to meet student demands but also refuse to take any action against student activists (Light, 1977). In this approach, authorities attempt to avoid rousing or estranging the opposition through repression but also work to avoid encouraging their efforts through some form of concession. The goal of

this tactic is to either outmaneuver student activists or wait them out, thus resulting in the dissolution of the movement and in the minds of leaders, a peaceful resolution. Officials appear to publicly ignore the student movement or at least not identify them as oppositional. This can also be done intentionally to deny activists legitimacy through any recognition by the administration (Gamson, 1975). It may also be the case that the movement has not yet attracted the administration's attention. Because many student movements may not be perceived as legitimate in their formation stages, the likely initial response by most administrators may be to ignore the student movement. It isn't until effective extra-institutional tactics or reputational threats are made that many movements receive administrative attention that either negatively or positively affects their cause. In the example of Mizzou, administrators ignored student concerns over racism on campus until the issue reached a point of reputational threat. By that time, student activists had taken to social media and made greater public demands of campus administrators, including the firing of the university president. This case is consistent with previous findings where campus administrators who ignored student activists and would not interact with them faced greater incidences of public and violent protests (Long, 1970).

Authorities engaged in "buy-off" tactics attempt to compromise with student activists, either by negotiating concessions based upon their demands, or by removing previous negative sanctions (Lammers, 1977). The primary concern of leadership using this tactic is appeasement and maintenance of an overall facade of a peaceful campus environment. Cases of buy-off commonly occur outside of public arenas because they are often employed prior to larger campus publicity. One public example of compromise following a larger protest occurred during the Chicano studies movement at UCLA, where students fought against the historical marginalization of Chicano studies at the university. In this case, faculty recommendations of

disestablishment were followed by suspension of new admissions in the program, both of which were compounded by the university's refusal to create a new department (Rhoads, 1998). The students who organized protests for a UCLA Chicano studies department belonged either to MECha (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan) or Conscious Students of Color (CSC) (Rhoads, 1998). After several attempts to obtain administrative approval of creation of a Chicano studies department, students were not discouraged by the UCLA President's dismissal of their demands. Instead of folding their efforts, students continued to rally and six of them launched a hunger strike on May 25, 1993 (Rhoads, 1998). The hunger strike lasted two weeks, when the university compromised on several of the student demands and created the Cesar Chavez Center for Chicano Studies. The Center was not the department status students had hoped for, but the promised Center came with four faculty appointments to the Chicano studies program and charges droppped against earlier protestors.

Finally, campus leadership can take a supportive or cooperative approach to student activism. Students engaged with cooperative leaders are perceived as community members and are therefore approached on equal footing with campus officials. Strategic goals and demands may be shared or overlap in some way between authorities and students. Those that join in may have agendas similar to student activists or may have unique personal goals or identities influencing their handling of specific movement goals.

Organizational Theory

Scholars recognize that "analysis of social movements and organizations must explicitly take into account various kinds of state-based power that play important roles in constraining and facilitating social movements in organizations and markets" (Davis, Morrill & Soule, 2008, p. 393). Students and presidents are acting inside an institutional environment within a social

context that exerts multiple constraints and contexts onto the interpretation of student movements. Presidents must balance and anticipate various constraints in reacting to student activism. For example, recent legislation passed in several states requires disciplinary action (including expulsion) against protestors under the guise of free speech rights of campus speakers (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2017). This external constraint of public institutions was introduced in reaction to student activism and also affects future activist efforts. Thus, the ways in which presidents act within the contexts of their institution, community, and greater socio-political environment is as important to their decision-making process as their personal considerations.

New Institutionalism Theory

New institutionalism theory provides several mechanisms by which one can make sense of presidential responses in this research. New institutional theory is concerned with the way that organizations are rooted in social, systemic, and political environments and as a result reflect the rules, beliefs, and conventions that are built into the environmental ecosystem (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Organizations and their members operate using organizational norms, rules and habits as shortcuts for behavior. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) identify three processes for reproduction of organizational norms: coercive, normative, and mimetic processes. These processes give legitimacy to an organization either by being legally sanctioned, morally authorized, or culturally supported (Scott, 2001). It is relevant to this research whether college presidents are responding or complying out of expedience, moral obligation or because, due to their force of habit, presidents and other institutional stakeholders are unable to think "outside the box" and conceive of another way of doing things (Scott, 2001). All three of these processes and their associated sources of legitimacy may be applied to understanding which internal or

external factors influence the decisions of college presidents as they determine their responses to student activist groups.

Coercive processes involve political pressures such as rules, laws, or regulatory oversight and control (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Another approach is incentivizing certain practices by the state by some sort of financial motivation, perhaps state legislatures withholding funding for failure to comply with certain state laws governing speech. Coercive diffusion can also occur through geographic locations or localized solutions where neighboring states adopt similar policies once one state has found a certain measure of success with a policy (Berry & Berry, 1999).

Normative practices constrain an individual's thinking within their own organization and role, acting out of habit with very little questioning or creative thinking outside of their roles. Presidents can also experience constraints in their own ways of thinking; that is, normative ideas and behaviors within higher education and their institutions kept them from making decisions outside of what would be considered normative or acceptable responses as evaluated by public opinion. Cohen and March (1974) apply considerations of normative practice to their study of college presidents, concluding that presidents operate in a model based on identity (like institutional logics): who am I and what does someone in my position do in a situation like this? The president is not necessarily considering utility, but rather searching for the appropriate logic to guide her actions.

Normative responses from large constituencies may manifest in repressive state policies, as in the case of campus repression during the Vietnam War era (Gibson, 1989). However, such normative behavior may be enacted without reflective policies: in his study of the McCarthy era, Gibson (1988) found that widespread political intolerance (the level of acceptability of ideas

different from one's own) was actually not responsible for repressive state policies related to McCarthyism. Instead, mass public opinion set broad constraints on the behavior of policymakers or authorities (Gibson, 1988). When applying normative processes to social movement theory, Schneiberg and Soule (2005) find that organizations become to look more like each other because they are undergoing a process where certain policies are advocated through activism and then become institutionalized or culturally accepted as the norm. This prior research suggests that leaders prefer to pursue acceptable institutional or localized solutions to issues, or to implement benchmarked practices, processes or solutions that have already been legitimated by higher education (Schneiberg & Soule, 2005). In another example, Barnhardt and colleagues (2016) explore how mimetic tendencies and normative behaviors of Southeastern colleges and universities respond to providing in-state tuition to nonresident immigrant students. They conclude that state policies had not constrained considerations by leaders; instead, leaders had been constrained by what they interpreted as acceptable expressions toward nonresident immigrant students, including public statements and campus policy.

Mimetic processes or the process of isomorphism, are the ways in which organizations come to look more and more like one another through adoption of "best" practices from other similar organizations. Student movements can influence perceptions of "best" practices, as in the case of tactical diffusion of shantytowns at elite colleges in protest of anti-apartheid student activists in the 1980s (Soule, 1997). Conversely, there are acceptable channels for expressing student dissent, where presidents may attempt to channel mobilization efforts (Jenkins & Eckert, 1986). Finally, mimetic processes also function when activism breaks through old norms, combines with policy that implements some measure of demands, and then the policy is enacted and diffused across a group of institutions, professional organizations, or all higher education.

Such institutional mimetic change has been found to occur across institutions of higher education with the example of nonresident tuition policies from Barnhardt et al. (2016).

Contextual considerations. College presidents must consider a range of internal and external factors in their decision-making, whether that involves daily operations of the institution or responding to student activists. For purposes of this study, limitations or constraints upon presidential decision-making will be grouped into two general categories: institutional and external contexts. Institutional contexts that may introduce constraints or influence decision-making include institutional type, whether or not an institution is religiously affiliated, oversight and governance, institutional size, geographic location, or academic focus. Other institutional contexts not measured in this study also include prestige, a campus history of student activism, and student demographic composition. External contextual factors that may constrain president decisions consist of external governing bodies (i.e., state legislature), public and private political actors, state and federal policies, external media and social contexts, professional student or academic organizations, national social movement groups, and external entities targeting campus.

The commonly cited example of free speech is used in this section to exemplify state-based limitations in decision-making. Free speech is a particularly relevant example because it touches upon motivations for student collective mobilization but also is an important factor considered by campus presidents when determining how to respond to student activism. Federal law also protects hate speech and potentially harmful speech (Sun and McClellan, 2020), complicating the tension between free speech issues and campus commitments to equity, diversity and inclusion. In their guide for campus leaders on free speech and First Amendment issues, Sun and McClellan (2020) outline the inherent challenges facing presidents regarding free

speech issues, advising that "campus leaders pause when protests, provocative events, and harmful messages are at issue because we have to ask ourselves, what are the college's principles and policies around free speech, and are we subject to the First Amendment of the Constitution?" (p.2). Many limitations of presidential or administrative power are attributed to the First Amendment when it is instead an issue of free speech as defined by state-specific policies or institutional policies (Sun & McClelland, 2020). Free speech as protected by the First Amendment generally only applies to public colleges and "actions arising from employees at the public institution" (p. 5). State-specific policies related to free speech can also define policies for public and private institutions in a given state (Sun & McClellan, 2020). These contextual differences result in the necessity of presidents to be highly informed on several areas related to free speech on campuses and how their campus can differ from another, depending upon whether or not it is a public or a private institution, its own policies and historical precedent in past decisions, and the state in which the institution resides (Sun & McClellan, 2020).

Free speech issues recently have focused on campus responses to so-called "provocateurs," who are either invited to speak on campus by student groups or book their own "college tour" (Hauser, 2017). These cases were challenging for campus leaders, caught in a debate between free speech and ensuring a commitment to campus values of equity, diversity and inclusion. These challenges were tested further when students engaged in heckling and "shouting down" of controversial speakers, which gained national attention through conservative media channels (Hauser, 2017). For a short time, campuses and their leadership seemed to be confounded by what to do in these situations. Then, as responses were issued at campuses across the nation and professional organizations began to make unified recommendations, consensus around a campus response appeared to take shape (ACE, 2018). Generally, the preferred

response was to allow controversial—and even offensive—speakers to speak and students were allowed to protest, but they were encouraged not to heckle or shout down. While some states instituted repressive policies (an example of coercive processes) around what they deemed student censure of speakers, campuses also tried not feed into conservative narratives of institutions denying free speech, offering alternative methods of protest to students and public condemnation of hate speech by campus leadership. Such organization level processes and practices were advocated by the profession of college leaders and associated campus organizations, which may limit what the president conceives of as possible and introducing limitations in their thinking and normative practices (Schneiberg & Soule, 2005). While it may have been the best possible response or process in the moment, it is possible that presidents will experience additional internal institutional constraints and external constraints around future free speech issues that limit their creativity and ability to meet students demands, in some cases (Schneiberg & Soule, 2005).

Reputational threat. Studies of corporate boycotts inform our understanding of student movement interactions with administrators and the effect on movement outcomes. Scholars of corporate boycotts have recognized a lack of theory to explain why some corporations meet boycotter's demands and others do not, and the extent of boycott demands that may or may not be met (King & Soule, 2007; King, 2008). One study of corporate concessions to boycotts found that only one quarter of all publicized boycotts were successful (Friedman, 1985). King's (2008) paper is the only recent study designed to understand what determinants affect a boycott's ability to influence organizational leaders to change corporate practices or policies. He also sought to identify the conditions wherein activists and/or other secondary stakeholders can influence the organization.

King concludes that an important mechanism used by boycotters to influence their targets is threatening the company's public image (which in turn affects revenue): companies are more likely to respond to boycotters' efforts when they have had recent or increased negative media portrayal (King, 2008). While direct harm to revenue in the same sense as corporations is not of primary concern to higher education institutions that are generally non-profit organizations, reputational threat to colleges and universities can affect college rankings (to the extent this is valued by the institution), student and faculty recruitment, student enrollment, funding through competitive research grants, and talent retention for faculty and staff.

Organizational Insiders

Social movement theory has traditionally focused on organizational outsiders, particularly because social movement activists were originally defined by acting outside of existing organizational or governmental structures (Tarrow, 1994). However, as Meyerson and Scully (1995) and Zald and Berger (1978) note, activism within an organization but outside of traditional organizational channels is an avenue for mobilizing organizational and social change. Social movements within organizations are now recognized by scholars, whereas previous definitions had confined social movements to outsider action targeting an organization or government (Zald & Berger, 1978; Santoro & McGuire, 1997). This expansion of theory allows study of tactics beyond the narrow repertoire of outside protests and direct conflict with the opposition, including collaboration with variable partnerships and reformist efforts within institutions (McAdam, 1982; Soule & King, 2008). However, organizational activists may still employ extra-institutional tactics and strategies in their efforts (McAdam et al., 2001).

Movement actors frequently challenge organizations in which they are embedded (Davis et al., 2008), and in the case of colleges and universities, faculty, administration, and students are

embedded in the larger organization. Each stakeholder group has a different role in the institution, with students arguably in the most unique role because, as Parsons (1960) notes, students in the university are customers who also have become internal members of the organization. In this manner, students are necessary to the university's functioning, and satisfied, successful students are crucial to the university's success. However, there are challenges and risks to insider groups (such as students) in advocating for organizational change, as universities or law enforcement may impose sanctions on student activists.

If college presidents do not mitigate risk and successfully navigate their organizational role, they face loss of employment, financial consequences, or loss of other work opportunities. For example, in the case of black and ethnic studies movements in California in the 1960s, college presidents were caught between social activism on campus on the part of students and oppositional conservative politicians who sought to punish student demonstrators and suppress their demands (Rojas, 2007). John Summerskill, President of San Francisco State College during the Third World Strike in 1967-68, was sympathetic to the social movement and sought to work with students and support their efforts, although he eventually resigned as a result of the turmoil (Summerskill, 1971; Rojas, 2007). In another example, at the University of California at Berkeley (UC Berkeley), the Berkeley Free Speech Movement was formed in response to university restrictions on campus free speech (Cohen & Zelnick, 2002). UC system president Clark Kerr chose to ignore student movement demands and denied the students audience with UC's administration. In response, students directly challenged university authorities via protests and sit-ins, demanding that the administration re-open negotiations with students on the restriction of political causes and speech on campus (Cohen & Zelnick, 2002). Through their extra-institutional tactics, students accomplished free speech recognition on campus in a matter

of months and forced the resignation of the university's chancellor. After ignoring initial demands, Kerr supported student movement efforts, but was then fired by the Board of Trustees for his refusal to expel students who participated in campus protests and sit-ins at UC Berkeley (Kerr, 2003). In the above examples, Summerskill chose to support student activists and Kerr attempted to initially ignore them then eventually gave his support, yet both leaders lost their jobs as a result. As leaders, and as tempered radicals, weighing risks and managing external political pressures are necessary to understanding the consequences of movement involvement. However, tempered radical leaders and administrators should understand that their action may affect their position or career and their ability to effect insider change in the future.

Tempered Radicals

With such risks to their positions and constraints upon their considerations and practices, who are the types of college presidents that may support or at least advocate for change that students wish to pursue? Meyerson and Scully (1995) call organizational insiders engaging in activism efforts while wishing to remain part of the organization, "tempered radicals." Tempered radicals are people who work for change as both insiders and outsiders of their organizations. They live with ambivalence and duality of their identities, tempering radical tendencies while in the workplace and perhaps appearing less radical interacting with organizational outsiders. Often, their radicalism is rooted in an area of their identity, either as part of a marginalized racial, gender, ethnic, or social group, or in terms of ideology (Meyerson & Scully, 1995; Meyerson 2003). To function within organizational norms, some part of their identities may *appear* to be suspended. However, rather than abandoning their identities while in the workplace, tempered radicals seek to work within existing organizational hierarchies to leverage "small wins" (Weick, 1984), sometimes taking approaches outside of existing organizational channels. Translated to a

campus environment, in situations where students interact with an administrator who views herself as a tempered radical, they may find greater cooperation in meeting their demands.

Tempered radicals exist within any type of organization or firm, and at all levels of the organizational hierarchy. Possible settings include a corporation, firm, non-profit organization, university, local, state, or federal government. In fact, tempered radicals are more likely to believe that they can effect change through their current position with an employer they may view as having a deficiency in an area such as diversity or social justice (Meyerson, 2004). In one example, a director at Hewlett-Packard was dismayed at the company's announcement not to offer domestic benefits. However, she recognized in the moment that "the radical thing to do would have been to quit…the corporate thing, as a personnel manager, would have been to sell the executive decision. Being a tempered radical is about keeping your values and seeing what you can do—without getting fired—while creating more value for the company" (Meyerson, 2004, p. 22). While the tempered radicals framework focuses on every day, informal leaders as the subject of study, it is not limited to this group. Their presence within the system does not preclude leaders, such as presidents, from also working within their roles or with outside social movement collaborators to effect change. In the example of UC Berkeley, President Kerr had expressed his desire to incrementally advocate for change like that sought by students, and was frustrated by their accelerated efforts (Kerr, 2003). Based upon reflections of his role in the movement, Kerr was a tempered radical, but too tempered for student activists, and too radical for conservative California politicians who had him removed from his position (Kerr, 2003). Meyerson and Scully's (1995) work bridges organizational science and social movement scholarship that previously failed to address organizational insiders who also participate in activism at their workplace. Tempered radicals has primarily been used in organizational

literature to understand how organizational change occurs as a result of individual or collective action from within an organization, as demonstrated by the scholarship of Ashford et al. (1998), Soule (2012), and Kellogg (2009; 2011; 2012). In a recent study on the establishment and diffusion of domestic partnership benefits in organizations, Briscoe and Safford (2005) examined gay and lesbian activist groups within Fortune 500 Companies in the US to understand how collective action within a company brought about organizational change. In another study, the author found that activism within universities, but not by students, shaped the staffing of university recycling programs (Lounsbury, 2001). Employee activism has also been extended to the study of diversity work in organizations, as tempered radicals often engage in issues directly related to their personal identities or values (Scully & Segal, 2002).

In organizational theory, the idea of tempered radicals builds upon the concept of organizational insiders in the literature on organizational change. There are several key mechanisms that illustrate the strategies and behaviors of tempered radicals: issue selling (Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Dutton, Ashford, O'Neill, & Lawrence, 2001), impression management (Goffman, 1959), and upward influence (Mowaday, 1978). Issue selling is a common tactic used by tempered radicals and is particularly useful for understanding how they frame and catalyze their organizational change efforts. Top managers (or college leadership) have limited attention to devote to various strategies and issues, and issue selling is the approach used by non-executive managers to define organizational issues for leadership through "a mechanism that prompts top management to attend to issues that they might not otherwise attend to" (Dutton & Ashford, 1993, p. 401). Issue selling borrows from public policy literature in prioritizing issues for policy makers in that it is the study of how issues come to be issues in the first place, not of how they are decided or how decisions are implemented or impact others. A study by Ashford et al. (1998)

on issue selling and impression management found that a perceived favorability of issue selling in an organization increased willingness of people like tempered radicals to sell gender-equity issues. The authors also found that individual differences did not predict willingness to sell gender-equity issues, suggesting that organizational culture and history may affect behavior of tempered radicals more greatly than identity salience (Ashford et al., 1998).

Tempered radicals also engage in impression management, weighing the risks of issue selling in each situation and assessing potential impact on their reputation and future effectiveness in their organizational roles (Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Ashford et al., 1998). Impression management originated in social psychology and describes behaviors that individuals employ to control impressions or images formed of them by others (Goffman, 1959). Impression management helps scholars understand how tempered radicals may manage risks of issue selling or activism in the workplace, not wishing to become ineffective through perceptions of negative or inappropriate issues or by pushing too radically for change and ultimately compromising their position or effectiveness in bringing about future change. Therefore, the mechanism of impression management is used to recognize the constraints and motivations behind how and when a tempered radical promotes an issue.

Finally, upward influence in organization theory explains how the influence source (the tempered radical), the leader or top manager, and the organizational context can affect the type of strategy employed by the tempered radical to nudge for organizational change (Mowaday, 1978). Upward influence can be more effective if students or tempered radicals attract "supportive political elites" to their cause (McCarthy & Zald, 1987). In all three behaviors, the organizational context influences the probability of an individual engaging critical decision makers on campus. Research on gender equity issues in the workplace has shown that a warm

and trusting relationship with leadership, perceived acceptance of issue selling in the organization (through practice more so than policies), and the presence of individuals of various identities in management and not just colleagues affect the likelihood of employees engaging in issue selling. Additionally, support of an issue by management leads to a perception of organizational acceptance and greater involvement on the issue by other employees than without the public perception.

Studies of grassroots or tempered radicals leadership on campus have focused on informal but employed roles such as faculty, student affairs professions or non-leadership administrative positions (Kezar, Gallant & Lester, 2011; Kezar, 2012). Kezar's (2012) study of faculty analyzes the implementation of change agendas by tempered radicals. Since this type of study falls in the leadership and not social movement literature, it does not address the application of social movement theories or the unique role of students as change agents on campus. Kezar (2012) instead theorizes about how social movement leadership reaches an important point in the movement to decide whether and how to converge with efforts of individuals in positions of authority. She terms this phenomenon "bottom-up convergence with top-down leadership" (Kezar, 2012). A similar point of decision-making exists in student movements and how they decide to recruit tempered radicals to their grassroots cause. Students are perceived as being at the bottom of the hierarchy on campus in that they are powerless unless they organize as a group through collective action, and their recruitment of administrators can influence consequences of their movement.

Tempered radicals on campus can either be faculty, staff, or administrators who engage with student activists to promote their cause or campus leaders themselves, who engage directly with students as a tempered radical. In either case, leadership and campus employees may not all

agree on the best approach to student movements on campus. However, the conditions created by tempered radicals have an effect on leadership decisions to meet student movement demands. Astin's (1975) study of student protests found evidence that faculty participation in student protests had important impacts on student movement outcomes: student protests were lengthier, more students were involved, and protests had a greater impact on campus life, all of which led to greater fundamental changes in campus policy and environments (Astin, 1975). In protests of the 1960s where faculty were involved, they acted as mediators with administrators, which resulted in a decreased likelihood of student sanctions and campus police were less likely to be called (Astin, 1975). In the report, Astin concluded that faculty involvement gave protests legitimacy and influence.

Tempered radicals straddle a fine line of working within organizational norms while simultaneously pushing against them (Meyerson, 2003). As such, it is important to consider the normative practices and framing that may be influencing tempered radicals and their behavior, despite their personal efforts to advocate for progress. What kind of tempered radical behavior by presidents would even be considered "acceptable" within their localized and institutional communities? At what point are they "radical"—or are they mostly just "tempered?" These questions are important to the discussion of presidential responses, since the concept of tempered radicals is predicated on the assumption that they are acting within constraints, internal and external and are, therefore, limited in how they respond. Are presidents also limited in what they can respond to? For example, which endogenous or exogenous shocks to higher education via student movements are appropriate for issuing a response? While they may not entirely address these questions, study of public advocacy by administrators supports the idea that campus

leadership can positively influence campus climate and may be one route for presidents seeking to develop as tempered radicals (Barnhardt et al., 2018).

College President Literature

In higher education, the role and leadership of college presidents has become its own body of literature, consisting of studies on the college presidency and a less scholarly, but still relevant, collection of college presidential memoirs. These autobiographical works often focus on a president's tenure at a university and detail their reflections on the university, its students, history, and their own role within it. In some cases, presidents reflect on their involvement in student activism on campus and their perceptions of campus culture and student movements. For example, James Duderstadt, former president of University of Michigan, frequently refers with pride to the tradition of student activism at Michigan and the university values that such activism represents. He even offers some insights into the ways that presidents may co-opt or encourage student movements: "Michigan's long-standing tradition of student and faculty activism was a characteristic to be both respected and embraced. There might even be times when we might intentionally stimulate such activism" (Duderstadt, 2007, p. 35). Presidents may encourage or stimulate activism when their interests align with those of student activists. In such cases, student activism is used as evidence of necessary change for presidents when making a case to local or state government officials, the Board of Trustees, or the campus community.

Due to the limitations mentioned, information on college presidents is a small body of literature consisting of a few disjointed sources of information, the seminal works in this area are reviewed in the following section; however relevant, these works are also dated. Today, many presidential studies are confined to yearly surveys distributed by established and professionalized groups—ACE, for example—who have ongoing relationships and trust built with college

presidents. For this reason, their networks are extremely guarded and studies outside of those sponsored by the organization are rare, making the dearth of literature a consequence of a number of convergent factors.

College Presidents as Symbols

Tierney (1989) argues that cultures with long histories are more ingrained in societies or organizations; the culture is perpetuated through patterns of perceptions, thoughts, and actions that are then replicated in new institutional leaders. Therefore, what a college or university has done in the past is likely to affect how leaders of that institution are expected to and will act in their roles. Any divisions in organizational culture or failed attempts at re-envisioning the culture will continue to affect the culture, causing conflicts and challenges within the organization and for its leaders (Birnbaum, 1992). In one study, college presidents that had the most success in leading their institutions had close alignment with faculty, administration, and board interpretations of campus culture and goals (Birnbaum, 1992). Other data supportive of symbolic leadership showed that new presidents, regardless of their efforts (or lack thereof), enjoyed higher constituent support after succeeding an outgoing leader (Birnbaum, 1992; Levin, 1998). Successful or failed leadership efforts can also create political opportunities for student activists when interacting with college presidents.

Tierney (1989) asserts that organizations are not rational and objective but are instead subjective and socially constructed. Elements of the socially constructed organization are the roles, processes, activities, history, and current reality of the organization. Social constructs such as symbols assist in communicating and perpetuating the organizational myth to the benefit of the day-to-day operations of the organization. Tierney draws from the Institutional Leadership Project (ILP) (Birnbaum et al., 1989) study data to understand how college presidents acts as

symbols to communicate and frame organization messages for constituents, stating that "the symbolic role of a college or university president allows an individual to try to communicate a vision of the institution that other individuals are incapable of communicating" (Tierney, 1989, p. 156). A close examination of this statement highlights the use of the word "try." A leader can try to communicate but his actions are still open for interpretation by constituents. Further, the organization's culture constrains the meaning of the leader as a symbol, and the interpretations will be influenced by the leader's role in the broader institutional narrative (Tierney, 1989). Therefore, one can assume that any use of "symbol" going forward is inclusive of unintentional symbols which the president may embody by her activities and should be considered when determining responses to student activism.

Leadership and Ambiguity

Two extensive leadership studies involving campus visits, interviews with presidents, campus leaders, administrators, faculty, and students and large numbers of college campuses (30-40) were conducted in the 1970s and 1980s (Cohen & March, 1986; Birnbaum et al., 1989). Cohen and March's (1986) presidential study and the Institutional Leadership Project (ILP) (Birnbaum et al., 1989) are the foundational studies upon which much of what is known and theorized about presidential leadership are built. Each study resulted in interpretations of the presidential role based on the firsthand accounts and opinions of those led by them. Cohen & March (1986) conducted a study of a sample of 42 four-year, baccalaureate-granting institutions, both public and private. A choice was made to exclude community colleges due to the different goals and nature of these institutions. Statistics from the tenth edition of *American Universities and Colleges* were used in combination with survey responses and interviews from visits to the 42 colleges. The authors conducted interviews with presidents, faculty, administration and

student leaders on campus. The findings of the study were used to describe the reality of college presidents and their decision-making approach. Additionally, the authors used the data to speculate about the unique nature of the university as an "organized anarchy" that is unlike most other conventional organizations (Cohen & March, 1986).

Institutional leadership project. Arguably some of the best empirical pieces on college presidents were a product of data collected as part of the Institutional Leadership Project (ILP) of the National Center for Postsecondary Governance and Finance (Neumann & Bensimon, 1990; Birnbaum, 1992). The ILP was a five-year longitudinal study of college leaders in formal positions at thirty-two institutions and related studies were published by some combination of Neumann, Birnbaum, and Bensimon during the late 1980s and early 1990s, during the project's first phase of data collection using only cross-sectional analysis. Interviews with campus leaders, both formal and informal, three-hour interviews with presidents, and on-site visits by the three researchers were conducted over 1986-87 (Neumann & Bensimon, 1990; Birnbaum, 1992). Interviews were conducted with college presidents and other formal leaders such as trustees, vice presidents, faculty leaders, and student leaders. The sample was intended to be diverse and thus consisted of eight public or private universities classified as research/doctoral granting, eight state colleges, eight independent colleges of various programs and sponsorships, and eight community colleges (Neumann & Bensimon, 1990). The bulk of publications following the study focused on the behavior and perceptions of the college president, whether from the self-evaluation by the president herself or himself or by other campus leaders.

Neumann & Bensimon (1990) identified presidential types to categorize presidential behavior and approaches to campus problems, creating avatars that embodied the most common presidential characteristics identified in their study. The presidents were characterized based

upon their tendencies toward directing their target of attention (internal or external), mode of action (initiator or reactor, entrepreneur and risk-taker or maintainer, leader that thinks about the future or the past), and relatedness to the institution (connectedness or distance to direct reports, community, or institution). Birnbaum (1989) further employed the data to test power and influence, behavior, and implied leadership theories. He found patterns in the different leadership theories by institution type, with presidents of four-year institutions defining leadership in terms of power and influence to a greater extent than community college presidents. He concluded that presidents of public institutions were more likely to include contingency frames in their definitions and community college presidents were less likely to include symbolic elements in their leadership definitions than all other presidential types (Birnbaum, 1989).

The ILP data provides additional evidence in support of the theory of leaders as symbols on college campuses, as interviewees describe the symbolic importance of presidential actions and speeches. Student leaders are particularly attuned to presidential statements, believing that presidents have a responsibility to protect their interests in social progress (Birnbaum, 1992). Birnbaum also concludes that "we attribute events and outcomes of organizations to acts of leaders because they are prominent and visible in many organizational activities and processes and we expect people identified as leaders to be agents of institutional change. This tendency to attribute influence to leaders, even when it may not be objectively warranted, distorts the way we think about leadership, and obscures the actual relationship between leaders and outcomes" (Birnbaum, 1992, p. 7). Although they may not be directly responsible, presidents are symbolically responsible for the integrity of the institution (both historical and cultural) and are thus held accountable when that integrity is perceived to be compromised by university action or inaction.

Conclusion

This chapter established the necessity of including perspectives and analysis of college presidents in student movement literature. Historically, college presidents have been absent from case studies of student movements, most likely due to issues of access, based upon positional power and potential repercussions for sitting presidents. What little scholarship that existed on college presidents and student activism was dated and failed to address the modern student movement era that has taken root with the proliferation of social media and resurgence of social justice issues. A review of three main bodies of literature for this dissertation was provided in the areas of social and student movements, organizational theory, and research on the college presidency. The basic principles of social movement theory were used to provide background for student movements. Social movement theory emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century as scholars sought to understand collective action in the face of oppositional structures (Tilly, 1978; Tarrow, 1994; Snow & Soule, 2010). Social movement scholars have primarily been interested in when, where, why and how people organize. Analysis and applicability of grievance and deprivation models (Gamson, 1968) and resource dependency models (McCarthy & Zald, 1977) was reviewed to deepen understanding of student mobilization. A brief history of student movement literature and how it evolved from 1960s and 1970s provided context for the dissertation and chapters to follow. Studies on student movements were used illustrate tactics and strategies employed by students, in addition to issues of power and legitimacy that may influence president responses. Finally, a section on leadership responses to student movements explored possible theories related to leadership responses to campus dissent, with a specific focus on the typology from Lammers (1977) proposing responses of fight off, stand off, buy-off, and join in.

Next, areas of organizational theory were used to contextualize president responses in the following study. New institutionalism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) was described, and I suggested that normative and mimetic forces may constrain the conceivable range of choices for college presidents when responding to student activists. Collective action by organizational insiders is another possible theoretical frame for understanding presidents, as organizational theory scholars use it to explain why insiders may take action against their own organization (Zald & Berger, 1978; Santoro & McGuire, 1997). There are many unique insider groups in higher education—faculty, staff, students, administrators—making the study of organizational insiders particularly interesting in this setting. I reviewed literature on tactics used by organizational insiders and tempered radicals, which posited that incremental change could be advanced by people not part of a social movement but who may identify with the goals or mission of a given movement. In this way, I proposed that student activists and college presidents are both organizational insiders. They each used, to varying degrees, the techniques of issue selling (Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Dutton et al., 2001), impression management (Goffman, 1959), and upward influence (Mowaday, 1978).

The final body of literature reviewed was the collection of studies on college presidents, including materials authored by presidents such as memoirs, reflective articles and op-eds. The foundational studies on college presidents were reviewed and provided context for the contemporary understanding of the college president role as symbol and leader. Taken together, these theories and contributing works of research provide several possible areas of exploration and discussion of the following findings.

Chapter 3 Methodology

In my research design process, I expected interview data to show consistent factors that influence the course of action taken by university or college presidents in response to student activism. In particular, I anticipated that various environmental, personal, institutional, or political considerations contribute to whether a college president acts to suppress, or support a given student movement. In order to surface these factors and shed to light on the contexts and considerations that influenced them, I wanted to construct a study design that would generate rich, nuanced and probative insights beyond those that might be derived from even a broadly-based survey. I elected to use an open-ended, semi-structured interview protocol (Hammer & Wildavsky, 1993; Hopf, 2004; Kvale, 1992) to interview current and retired college presidents who have encountered at least one student movement on their campuses in the past fifteen years. Interview transcription, note-taking, and recording of memos before and after each interview were used as primary data points for analysis. Publicly available archival information found in student, local, state, and national newspapers as well as social media accounts or public statements by presidents was used to prepare for interview questions and corroborate interview data, where applicable. To retain confidentiality and anonymity of study participants, archival information is not cited in this dissertation although it is used to corroborate and complement interview data. Additionally, I have obscured specific details from movements or events that are unique to their institutions. For data analysis, I utilized the qualitative method of cross-case

analysis (Miles & Huberman 1994) where I evaluated interview data in an ongoing manner, similar to the approach used in developing grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Research Paradigm

As stated by Peshkin (1988), subjectivity is at play throughout the entire research process. Therefore, my memos reflected this awareness as I was reacting to my interview subjects and our conversations. I hold an interest in leadership due to my former role as Chief of Staff, where I worked closely with a college president over several years. My own position as a graduate student researcher at a public R1 university affects my perception of university leadership at similar institutions and my identity as a white, female researcher, inevitably affects the choices I make regarding methodology and interpretation of my qualitative results. My research and student development pursuits at the University of Michigan have furthered my knowledge and research in the area of higher education leadership, including my five years spent as a graduate student researcher at the National Forum on Higher Education for the Public Good (National Forum). In my time at the National Forum, I worked closely with current and retired college presidents, educational policymakers, and faculty in the area of leadership. This experience and research have shaped my interests and position on the importance of college and university research, especially how it relates to furthering social progress on campus. My interest in student activism stems from my research interests in the challenges and opportunities for advancement of diversity, equity, and inclusion practices on college campuses. By recognizing and reflecting on my positionality, I aimed to retain awareness and monitoring of my subjectivity throughout this study (Peshkin, 1988).

Research paradigms are used to describe a researcher's perspective as it relates to ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). As the researcher of this

subject, it is important to understand my own research paradigm while engaging in construction of the project, as it relates directly to my methodology and interpretation of results. There are three primary paradigms defined by Guba and Lincoln (1994): postpositive, interpretive/constructive, and critical. My approach to this research comes from a constructivist paradigm, where the ontological assumption is relativism, in that reality is determined by the subject's relationship to other people, entities, actions, or objects (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Proceeding from this assumption, constructivists believe that the relationship between the researcher and subject are highly context-specific (Lincoln & Guba, 2013), and that really what is to be known can be summed up by "it depends." Subjectivity is accepted as necessary to interpretation, and the researcher as well as research subject's subjectivities are acknowledged as part of the meaning-making process and local understanding is the goal of research. Constructivists recognize that physical reality shapes behavior and responses, and that "social reality is relative to the individuals involved and to the particular context in which they find themselves" (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 41). Therefore, based upon the ontological and epistemological assumptions of this paradigm, the methodology must be one that seeks to uncover the sense-making activities and thought processes behind the subject of study (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). The choice of interview subjects and questions for this project are informed by this paradigm and appropriate for my qualitative approach to this topic.

Sample Selection

This dissertation research is focused on higher education in the United States, therefore all participants and institutions in the sample are part of the U.S. system of higher education. Research has shown that institutional characteristics such as large size (Bayer & Astin, 1969; Lipset, 1971), highly prestigious (Hodgkinson, 1970), public institutions (Bayer & Astin, 1969),

and four-year colleges predict the likelihood of the college or university being a site of student movements. One consistent finding is that four-year "large" (as defined by Carnegie Classification in IPEDS as over 10,000 full-time students enrolled) schools were twice as likely to have hosted activism in the 1960s (Bayer & Astin, 1969; Van Dyke, 1998). Additionally, compared to other institutional characteristics, institutional prestige is considered the most consistent predictor of campus protest events when examined across student social movement research (Hodgkinson, 1970; Dixon et al., 2008). Students at selective institutions have more resources to draw upon for social movement activity, including time, elite networks, and finances. Aside from personal resources, students at prestigious institutions also have access to larger endowments (Soule, 1997), which better fund student organizations and activities (Van Dyke, 1998). Selective institutions also tend to attract more sought-after faculty, and research has shown that high-profile faculty lean toward liberal and activist ideologies (Lipset, 1971). Finally, the relationship between prestige and student movement activity may also be explained by the potential media exposure for activists at selective institutions versus smaller, less prestigious colleges and universities (Dixon et al., 2008).

In spite of these past research findings, I have chosen *not* to restrict my sample selection to large, public, research institutions based upon the Carnegie classifications (NCES, 2017). I instead chose to expand my institutional sample to include any size and type of four-year institution (private or public). I then included any current or retired presidents who served in office at one of those institutions within the past fifteen years (2005-2020) during at least two publicly documented student movements. I made this decision for several reasons. First, I anticipated challenges in gaining access to college presidents and did not want to unnecessarily restrict my sample. Second, while student protest activity is more likely at certain types of four-

year institutions, a scan of higher education media showed that most, if not all, four-year institutions have experienced some form of student activism in recent years. Additionally, most four-year institutions have student newspapers, making it possible to find details of movements on most four-year campuses. In the few cases where there were not campus student newspapers (some were system-wide, for example) or institutions were too small to warrant student newspapers, I used local, community, and/or system-wide student publications to corroborate student activism events. I was also able to access details on publicized instances through archives of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and InsideHigherEd.com. Third, I hypothesized that differences in student demographics and institutional characteristics could yield greater insights into leadership responses based upon environmental context. Finally, policy differences in private versus public institution types may also be important considerations for presidents but would not be noticeable without comparison across cases. I anticipated there would be differences between presidential responses based upon campus historical contexts, student demographics, governance structures, and institutional characteristics, as defined above. The final sample also included four-year Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), which I predicted would present differences in presidential responses.

Literature on college presidents is limited, partially due to issues of access to the presidents themselves. College presidents are busy people, with many demands on their time and—I found through several presidential responses to my interview inquiries—multiple requests for their participation in surveys or research projects. Overall, these circumstances have resulted in less published research on college presidents, except perhaps, in instances like presidential memoirs, or where the research or reflections are based upon their own experiences

or network, often in retirement. Associations that cater to the training and professional development needs of college presidents and senior officers in higher education, like the American Council on Education (ACE) or the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), conduct annual surveys on their pool of college leaders, which keeps some data current. However, as I discovered in my research recruitment process, these networks are closely guarded by their member associations.

My approach to sample selection began with the constraints of presidents of four-year institutions that have been in office during at least one student movement over the past fifteen years. In addition to current presidents, I made the decision to include recently retired/Emeritus presidents in my study in order to increase the pool of potential participants. I also hypothesized that retired/Emeritus presidents may be more forthcoming in interviews compared to sitting presidents, resulting in greater insights into my research questions. My initial recruitment efforts began with personal outreach to my professional networks for possible contacts and participants. I contacted a combination of people from my current graduate student appointment at the National Forum, my classmates at the University of Michigan, and my former position at Western Governors University to request recommendations of college presidents that my contacts knew and may be interested and willing to participate. My contacts were provided with a one-page description of the participant requirements as well as a short research plan summary. Connections in my network then replied to my emails with lists of possible presidents that they felt comfortable connecting me with for this research. From this group of potential participants, I used purposeful selection (Light, Singer, & Willett, 1990) to ensure that student movements had recently occurred at the institutions where the presidents had held their current or recent positions.

In the beginning stages of this research, the sample was restricted to one institutional type: four-year, large, public research universities. However, the pool of potential institutions was expanded in order to increase the interview sample size and also to compare presidential responses across different institutional types and contexts. The inclusion of these various types of institutions has enriched the data and offered a guide to multiple paths for future research. Additionally, the similarities and differences between responses demonstrate the different leadership styles and the appropriateness of different responses by presidents depending upon their institution.

I reached out to a total of thirty-nine current and former college presidents via email invitation (see Appendix A) and provided a summary of the study and the interview protocol (see Appendix B and C). Twenty-seven presidents agreed to be interviewed and recorded by me via phone or webcam for this study. Seven presidents said "no" for a variety of reasons including availability, personal policy of not participating in graduate studies, health concerns, or recent crisis on campus. There were three "no replies" to my email, even after two follow up outreach emails. Two retired presidents agreed to be interviewed but missed their scheduled appointments for unknown/uncommunicated reasons and chose not to follow up with me after my repeated attempts to reach out and reschedule. Therefore, I concluded data collection with a 69 percent positive response rate to my interview request outreach. I attribute this level of success to the personal connections of the majority of the presidents I contacted for this study. One previous study of campus presidents had a response rate of 45 percent when reaching out to college presidents first via formal written requests with follow up via email without any type of personal connection (Smerek, 2009). This same scholar had success with presidents of smaller (less than 5,000 students) institutions. I expected a lower response rate from presidents at larger and more

prestigious institutions, and therefore included four-year institutions of various sizes and prestige in this study.

Interviews and Data Collection

Social movement theorists commonly utilize a qualitative approach, such as case studies or interviews, for data collection. According to Yin (1984), case study research can consist of a single case or multiple cases. Case study research can also utilize multiple levels of analysis within one study, for example, the organization and the system as a whole (Yin, 1984). Case studies often combine archives, observations, and interviews and could primarily be quantitative or qualitative, although this study proposes using only qualitative interview data and archival data for triangulation. Therefore, I initially planned to conduct semi-structured interviews with approximately twenty current and retired college presidents, or until reaching saturation (Maxwell, 2013). Interviews are the primary source of data for this study and were conducted using the attached protocol (Appendix B) to provide self-reported processes and strategies by college presidents when they responded to student movements on their campuses. Interview protocol questions were crafted to uncover a leader's process for handling student movements as well as their own guiding principles which may include university policies, stakeholder expectations and relationships, institutional contexts such as history and tradition, and personal philosophies on leadership and student activism. Interviews were originally structured to last sixty to ninety minutes, depending on the amount of time offered by the president for the interview. College presidents have limited time to spend on any given topic in a day, and I expected that I would not be given much additional time outside of my scheduled interview slot. However, it turned out that the most effective request was for thirty to forty-five minutes of a president's time, since it was challenging to find a larger block of time on their calendars. Due to

this decrease in time, I ended up cutting several questions that didn't seem to garner unique responses in the first few interviews, resulting in the amended interview protocol (Appendix C). In the national context of 2020 (and not 2019 when these interviews were conducted), I doubt I would have had much of a sample for this study. As it was, when I conducted interviews college presidents had a busy schedule with ever-changing priorities and multiple fires to put out in- and outside of campus each day. A few of my potential interviewees were caught in a cycle of rescheduling our interview until we finally found a time to meet—one of them was only available early Saturday morning. The twenty-seven current and former presidents I spoke to were able to share only 30-60 minutes of their time with me to discuss how they approached responding to student activists on campus. The final twenty-seven interviews lasted, on average, twenty-five minutes. In general (and as expected), interviews with retired presidents lasted longer than current presidents, often an additional 20-25 minutes. The interview protocol was piloted with one retired president prior to my first interview for data collection, this pilot interview is not included in my results; however, it did inform my preparation processes and interview protocol for the study. I assumed that follow up interview opportunities would be unlikely, and I did not conduct any follow up interviews. Therefore, it was important to record my impressions via memo prior to and directly after each meeting, and to triangulate presidential responses with publicly available archival data rather than through member-checking. A few presidents requested that I member-check any quotes with them prior to presentation of my study, which was honored.

Since the collection of interview data took place over several months, the use of memos and note-taking in my data collection and analysis was key to capturing impressions of presidential interviews and ongoing connections between research questions, interview

responses, and new ideas emerging from the data. It was also important to understand how my ongoing perceptions and positionality influenced my interpretation of interview data. Memos were written prior to each interview and included research on the college president's background and history, the institutional characteristics, news articles on the president, and archival data on the most recent student movements on campus. I would first search for this information in publications where more widespread movements would be recorded, such as the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and InsideHigherEd.com. If I identified publicized movements, I would then dig more deeply into each story by conducting searches on the topic in local newspapers and student newspapers. If I did not uncover recent movements that had gained national attention, I would turn to student, local, and state newspapers for movement examples. I had originally planned to find two specific incidents so that the presidents could compare and contrast the different movements. However, I found through the interview process that some incidents were highly sensitive, and presidents did not feel comfortable commenting on these events at the time of the interview. In other cases, interests or personal involvement by presidents in the movements I researched were not as optimal as some other examples they offered on their own. Therefore, I allowed the interviewees to provide their own examples, but I prompted them if they had trouble naming any (this only happened a couple of times). To capture this data, I also wrote memos following each interview and intermittently during coding to document emerging themes and codes as a result of ongoing analysis. Memo writing also included ongoing cross-case comparisons of interview responses and my own impressions. It is important to cross-case analysis, and qualitative analysis generally, to overlap data analysis with data collection (Eisenhardt, 1989). This type of overlap also allowed for adjustments in approach, interview

protocol, or sample selection during the data-collection process, which turned out to be necessary in my dissertation study.

Interviews were conducted via computer audio and recorded using the University of Michigan's proprietary BlueJeans web-conferencing platform. The majority of interviews were audio only, while several interviews were conducted via webcam, and one interview was conducted in person. In the few cases where interviews were not recorded, I created a written record of presidential responses during and immediately following my interview. I personally transcribed one-third of the interviews to increase my familiarity with the data. Due to time constraints, the remaining transcriptions were contracted to external transcribers. Transcriptions were deidentified and stored on my password-protected laptop and online in password-protected proprietary (University of Michigan) dropbox file storage and subscription-only qualitative coding software (Dedoose). Names of presidents and institutions have been kept confidential in transcription, coding, and data results due to sensitive information shared during interviews. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and a few requested personal reviews of any direct quotations prior to inclusion in this dissertation. Additionally, one respondent requested to not be quoted directly but rather have their overall responses included in the sample and data analysis.

Table 3.1 shows the list of participants, their institutional affiliation, public vs. private, and Carnegie classification. Table 3.2 shows the percentage of Pell-eligible students, total student enrollment (undergraduate and graduate students), geographic region and whether or not the institution is classified as rural or urban, including the type of rural or urban setting.

Table 3.1 Institutional Characteristics: Classifications

Name	Institution	Pub/Priv	Religious	Carnegie
Acosta	Kind College	Private	None	Bacc Colleges: Arts & Sciences Focus
Astaire	Plains state system	Public	None	N/A
Cole	College of the Saints	Private	Roman Catholic	Doctoral: High Research Activity
Copeland	Tumbleweed State College	Public	None	Master's: Large
Cunningham	Foliage University	Public	None	Doctoral: Very High Research Activity
Duncan	Harvest College	Public	None	Bacc: Diverse Fields
Fonteyn	Southern State University	Public	None	Doctoral: Very High Research Activity
Fosse	Celsius State College	Public	None	Master's: Large
Graham	Astonishing University	Public	None	Doctoral: Very High Research Activity
Hawkins	Boomerang University	Public	None	Master's: Medium
Hines	United University	Private	United Methodist	Doctoral: High Research Activity
Horton	Clive College	Private	None	Bacc Colleges: Arts & Sciences Focus
Kelly	Cooperative University	Private	Roman Catholic	Doctoral: High Research Activity
King	Grey College	Private	Free Methodist	Master's: Large
Limón	Miscellaneous College	Public	None	Master's: Large
Nijinsky	Proactive University	Private	None	Doctoral/Professional Universities

Nureyev	New England State	Public	None	Master's: Small
Pavlova	Coastal University	Public	None	Doctoral: High Research Activity
Robbins	Rookie University	Public	None	Doctoral: High Research Activity
Robinson	Presidential University	Private	None	Doctoral: High Research Activity
Rogers	Raptor University	Public	None	Doctoral: High Research Activity
Shawn	Rivers University	Public	None	Doctoral/Professional Universities
Smuin	East Sunrise University	Public	None	Master's: Large
Tallchief	Desert Rock University	Public	None	Doctoral: Very High Research Activity
Taylor	Skyline College	Public	None	Doctoral/Professional University
Tharp	Petite University	Public	None	Master's: Large
Weidman	University of Beachtown	Private	Roman Catholic	Master's: Medium

Table 3.2 Institutional Characteristics: Pell, Enrollment & Location

Institution	PELL	Enrollment	Region	Urban/Rural
Kind College	N/A	1,200	Northeast	Suburb: Large
Plains state system	N/A	N/A	Northeast	N/A
College of the Saints	30%	22,100	Midwest	City: Large
Tumbleweed State College	60%	6,700	Southwest	Rural: Fringe
Foliage University	27%	26,800	Southeast	City: Small
Harvest College	37%	1,350	Northwest	Town: Remote
Southern State University	13%	25,000	Southeast	Suburb: Small
Celsius State College	26%	8,250	Midwest	Town: Distant
Astonishing University	20%	16,700	Northwest	Town: Remote
Boomerang University	51%	4,450	Northeast	Town: Distant
United University	15%	14,300	Southeast	City: Large
Clive College	20%	1,850	Northeast	Suburb: Large
Cooperative University	14%	19,600	Northeast	City: Large
Grey College	31%	3,350	Midwest	Suburb: Small
Miscellaneous College	15%	21,800	Southeast	City: Small
Proactive University	30%	13,400	Northeast	City: Large

New England State	31%	5,400	Northeast	Town: Distant
Coastal University	51%	25,300	Northwest	City: Large
Rookie University	38%	10,500	Northwest	City: Small
Presidential University	45%	9,400	Southeast	City: Large
Raptor University	61%	13,605	Northeast	City: Large
Rivers University	31%	23,500	Southeast	City: Midsize
East Sunrise University	45%	15,000	Southeast	Town: Distant
Desert Rock University	20%	32,900	Southwest	City: Midsize
Skyline College	31%	17,100	Southeast	City: Large
Petite University	43%	4,700	Northeast	Town: Remote
University of Beachtown	19%	4,250	Northwest	City: Large

Institutional data presented in Table 3.1 and Table 3.2 are representative of data from when the interviews were conducted, which was from August 2019 through January 2020. Of the twenty-six four-year institutions in the sample, seventeen were public (65%), nine were private (35%), and five (19%) were religiously affiliated. Seven (26%) institutions enrolled under 5,000 students in the fall of 2018, four (15%) institutions enrolled 5,000 to 10,000 students, eight (31%) enrolled between 10,000 and 20,000 total students, and seven (26%) enrolled over 20,000 total students. As for city size, nine (35%) institutions were located in areas classified as a large city, five (19%) institutions in small or midsize cities, four (15%) in suburban areas, seven (26%)

in a remote or distant town, and one (4%) in a rural area. Three of the institutions (12%) were classified as an MSI or HBCU.

The geographic locations of institutions according to five general regions in the United States are provided in Table 3.2: Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, Northwest, and Southwest. These regions illuminate the political contexts of the institutions within the sample without revealing their state location. This was important for confidentiality since some of the institutions were in states with few four-year universities. The second geographic information was in the form of city type, based upon the Carnegie classification of the institution, as provided by the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) from the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES). Out of the twenty-seven presidents interviewed, nine (33%) served in the northeast region, eight (30%) in the southeast region, five (19%) in the northwest, three (11%) in the midwest, and two (7%) in the southwest.

Table 3.3 illustrates presidential characteristics, including tenure at their latest or current institution, previous experience, race/ethnicity and gender.

Table 3.3 President Tenure, Experience and Demographics

Name	Pres Tenure (at that institution)	Pres before?	Institution	Gender	Race/ Ethnicity
Acosta	Retired, 13 yrs	N	Kind College	Male	White
Astaire	Retired, 5 yrs	Y	Plains state system	Male	White
Cole	Retired, 11 yrs	Y	College of the Saints	Male	White
Copeland	2 yrs	N	Tumbleweed State College	Male	White
Cunningham	7 yrs	Y	Foliage University	Male	White

Duncan	2 yrs	N	Harvest College	Female	White
Fonteyn	Retired, 8 yrs	N	Southern State University	Female	White
Fosse	10 yrs	N	Celsius State College	Female	Latina
Graham	8 yrs	Y	Astonishing University	Male	White
Hawkins	6 yrs	Y	Boomerang University	Male	White
Hines	Retired, 12 yrs	N	United University	Male	Black
Horton	Retired, 8 yrs	N	Clive College	Male	White
Kelly	10 yrs	N	Cooperative University	Male	Black
King	7 yrs	N	Grey College	Male	Black
Limón	6 yrs	N	Miscellaneous college	Male	White
Nijinsky	5 yrs	N	Proactive University	Female	White
Nureyev	Retired, 17 yrs	Y	New England State	Male	White
Pavlova	Retired, 7 yrs	N	Coastal University	Female	White
Robbins	2 yrs	N	Rookie University	Male	White
Robinson	7 yrs	N	Presidential University	Male	White
Rogers	3 yrs	Y	Raptor University	Male	White

Shawn	19 yrs	Y	Rivers University	Male	White
Smuin	5 yrs	Y	East Sunrise University	Female	Latina
Tallchief	2 yrs	N	Desert Rock University	Male	White
Taylor	17 yrs	Y	Skyline College	Male	White
Tharp	Retired, 5 yrs	N	Petite University	Male	White
Weidman	Retired, 7 yrs	Y	University of Beachtown	Female	White

Interviews and Table 3.3 focus on the most recent institution or current institution where a president has served. Some presidents have moved on to other institutions following my interviews while one has since retired. Overall, a total of twenty-seven current and former presidents agreed to participate in this research. Of the twenty-seven, eight (30%) are women (compared to nineteen men), and four (15%) are people of color. The demographics of this sample are similar to recent analyses of college presidents in higher education, where in 2017 30% of college presidencies were held by women and 16.8% held by people of color (Howard & Gagliardi, 2018). Eleven (40%) of the participants in the study are retired. Presidents were encouraged in interviews to focus on the institution where they were serving as president or, if retired, where they had most recently served as president prior to retirement. However, presidents with prior presidential appointments were also left to their discretion to compare or provide additional examples as they thought appropriate.

Study participants had a wide variety of experience in presidential roles and at their current institutions. For example, President Robbins had only served as president of Rookie

University (his first appointment) for one and a half years, while President Cunningham of Foliage University had spent over forty years serving as president across several institutions. Presidents in the sample had a wide variety of roles in public service, business, government, and higher education prior to their current positions. Their tenure, experiences, and academic backgrounds contributed to rich data related to their student movement responses, in addition to institutional contexts.

Data Analysis

Data analysis employed general qualitative research guidelines on cross-case analysis, as proposed by Yin (1981; 1984; 2003) and Eisenhardt (1989). In general, cross-case analysis has suffered from lack of clarity around a consistent approach to data analysis. In 1979, Miles argued that "the problem is that no well-developed set of methods for doing cross-site analysis exists" (p. 598). Since then, researchers have made efforts to outline processes for within-case and cross-case analysis, to improve research methods and outcomes for researchers employing these methods. These recommendations will be used in my data analysis to ensure thorough review of the evidence and, if appropriate, identification and elaboration of concepts based upon my research.

Yin (1981) offers two approaches to cross-case analysis: the case-survey approach and the case-comparison approach. Yin suggests that the case-survey method has a number of constraints, resulting in limiting application to highly selective situations where "a critical factor or two appear to be of enormous importance" (p. 63). He therefore recommends the case-comparison approach for research outside of these constraints, and likens the approach to generalized theory building, where the researcher develops a tentative explanation then applies the explanation across cases, modifying the explanation as necessary (Yin, 1981). Yin's main

criticism of this approach, as with Miles (1979), is that the cross-comparison technique lacks specific outlined processes for the researcher to follow. He addresses this concern by recommending that the case study researcher "preserve a chain of evidence as each analytic step is conducted" (p. 63). This concern for lack of specific processes may also be resolved by the later recommendations made by Eisenhardt (1989) for cross-case analysis. Following the lead of Eisenhardt (1989), there are two possible approaches I could use that are applicable to this study: 1) use presidential or institutional characteristics (for example, private and public four-year colleges) to identify patterns; or, 2) select pairs of cases and list similarities and differences of the presidential responses. Eisenhardt (1989) also offers a process for case study analysis and comparison, including specific tactics for analyzing qualitative data across cases. These techniques are employed to aid the researcher in identifying subtle differences, themes, concepts, or similarities, which can lead to higher quality analysis and potentially, theory development (Eisenhardt, 1989; Bourgeois & Eisenhardt, 1988). While I planned to use Yin's (1981) case-comparison approach, the specific cross-case analysis comparison of groupings or pairings was determined after finalization of the sample of college presidents, their respective institutions and student movements. Given that the presidents in my sample were at different institution types (public or private) with different institutional contexts (for example, religious compared to non-religious), I chose to conduct cross-case analysis comparison across groups and used presidential and institutional characteristics to identify patterns.

Cross-case analysis is best done through use of memo writing, comparison tables, and coding of transcripts (Eisenhardt, 1989). All of three of these methods were used in data collection and analysis. As mentioned above, ongoing writing of memos was used to first jot down my notes and impressions of presidents, institutions, and student movements following my

archival research. In a number of cases I was also able to listen to recorded interviews or public addresses given by presidents, which helped me to familiarize myself with the president's cadence and approach to answering questions. I would then take notes during interviews and record my own impressions immediately following interviews. Additional memo writing was used during coding and data analysis to identify themes across participants and their institutions. For cross-case analysis, I created tables for my own use to capture individual responses to specific questions, organizing by president and institutional characteristics. Memos and tables created during interviews and data collection were used to create a codebook using a priori codes I also identified a priori codes based upon my literature review, typologies, and study propositions. As predicted, ongoing evaluation of transcripts and memos resulted in development of new, inductive codes to capture new insights from the data.

One group of parent codes was based upon possible responses from presidents to student protests such as support, wait out, ignore, repress, co-opt, or compromise. Sub-categories of codes consisted of topics related to these parent codes, such as specific concerns by presidents (safety, reputational threat, peaceful campus) or types of resolutions specific to each approach, such as student sanctions, policy enforcement or unreasonable demands when repression is used. A different group of parent codes pertained to organizational theoretical frameworks of organizational insiders, tempered radicals, and reputational threat. Subcategories were related to specific aspects, such as impression management, issue selling, or upward influence. Another group of parent codes covered institutional contexts and social contexts considered by presidents. This included institutional history, student-administration relations, political climate, town-gown relations, and campus climate issues. The types of student movement issues such as racial bias incidents, college affordability, campus policies, academic policies, free speech, or other issues

were separate codes. The final two parent code categories addressed presidential characteristics and processes for responding to student activists. Codes were recorded using the coding software Dedoose 8.1 and the complete codebook is provided in Appendix D.

A Word on Interviewing College Presidents

In any interview, there is a relationship between the interviewer and interviewee as subject and researcher. As the researcher, I held my own biases, personal experiences and identities that have been identified as part of this research. As subject, presidents also shared their experiences from a place of bias, or subjectivity. From a social constructivist perspective, this positionality is an inevitable part of exploring any topic. In studies of leadership, there is another unique dimension of power between an interviewer and graduate student like me, and a person who occupies the position of university president. In several interviews, I was acutely aware of the power differential between the president and myself. My awareness was heightened in moments where I had the impression that I was being told similar answers to what had been reported publicly. In fact, at times, I knew what had been reported publicly and recognized the responses given back to me. I understand that it is especially difficult for sitting presidents to engage in vulnerability and reflection for research purposes, even with assured confidentiality. Therefore, I also understand that there may be some weaknesses in interview data where genuine or reflective answers were not fully given. While I do not think that this minimizes the importance of the presidential perspectives provided in this dissertation, it is important to recognize their limitations, whether consciously or unconsciously invoked. In short, presidents cannot escape their own brands of impression management that face both internally and externally. They are managing the impressions of their students, staff, faculty and board members at their institutions. Publicly, they are managing the impressions of community

members, policy makers, media, and researchers like myself. This dance further highlights the various roles assumed and behaviors exemplified and amplified by leadership figures, especially those whose goal is to advocate for progress, as in the case of tempered radicals

Challenges and Limitations

I anticipated several limitations to my proposed method for data collection and analysis. For data collection, I was concerned that recruitment of campus presidents for interviews could be especially challenging. Presidents are notoriously busy and difficult to access, especially if I were to do a "cold call" approach to reaching out via email. Additionally, college presidents in their current roles might not be forthcoming in interviews regarding their handling of student movements since they may want to maintain a certain public image, or, if a movement was contentious, keep resolution details private. Since I planned to include public research institutions in this study, there was a risk that these students, based upon previous research, would be less likely than students at private, liberal arts institutions, to engage in student activism. I had planned to mitigate this last concern by conducting background research on student movements at specific institutions prior to reaching out to the presidents. However, I ultimately chose to include some campuses where two social movements had not recently occurred. I made this decision for two reasons: 1) I had access to these presidents and wanted to have the largest sample possible; 2) it was interesting and relevant to the research to include institutions where movements had not recently occurred. As I conducted the research, I found it was helpful to determine which types of institutions were more likely to experience student activism and how these presidents prepared for the inevitable demonstration or how they had handled more limited student activism.

Interviewing college presidents presented a few challenges unique to the participants I was working with and I had to pivot during interviews on a few approaches I had originally designed. First, I phased out several questions from the interview protocol after conducting a pilot interview and a couple of official interviews. Based upon responses, I concluded that these questions were not contributing to my research questions and/or were not well-received by participants (see Appendix C for revised interview protocol). As interviews progressed, I also eased off of requiring the specific examples I had researched so that the presidents could speak more freely about a variety of their experiences. I found that this flexibility gave me richer data, as presidents preferred to speak about their own examples. Additionally, some of the examples I had pulled from my archival research were not the best examples in terms of representing large numbers of students or unique tactics by students or presidential responses that would not have been publicized. Next, I encountered a challenge in interviews in getting some presidents to stay on topic. In these cases, I did my best to gently guide them back, but in some interviews, I was unable to get concrete answers to my questions. There were also some participants who had experienced extremely high-profile student movements on their campus that were, from my perspective, hesitant to provide great detail about their handling of events due to legal and reputational concerns. This was to be expected when interviewing college presidents about some more highly publicized or sensitive events.

The final limitation in my study design is common to this subject matter, in that interviews about social movements are frequently conducted sometime after the social movement takes place. This is likely the case because scholars do not recognize the significance of a social movement until after the event has transpired, but the lack of study during social movements or shortly thereafter weakens the body of literature. Research has shown that

retrospective self-reports can have memory-related biases, or what is commonly referred to in epidemiology literature as recall bias (Schwarz, 2007). Recall bias occurs because individuals already know the outcome of the treatment or movement (Schwarz, 2007) and memory can be imperfect and unreliable (Koriat, 1993). This concern can be somewhat mitigated through interviewing techniques that are crafted to reduce bias (Schwarz, 2007), but these studies did not acknowledge such an intervention in their interview designs.

I encountered several challenges in data analysis. First, due to recent national public health concerns around COVID-19, data analysis was conducted over an extended period of time. During this time, social contexts have greatly changed, affecting my thinking about these topics but also making it less likely that all of my coding occurred with a similar personal context and related bias. Second, general research concerns about the use of cross-case analysis apply to this dissertation study. I mitigated these possible limitations through my careful transcription, memo-writing, coding, and documentation of all data collection and analysis processes in order to preserve a "chain of evidence" (Yin, 1981, p. 63). With only the exceptions noted, I was able to pursue this research in a way that was consistent with the overall research design I had adopted. In a number of instances, I made minor adaptations that offered opportunities for enlarging and diversifying the sample or to make better use of precious time granted for interviews, always remaining consistent with the principles which guide this method of inquiry.

Chapter 4 What's Happening on Campus?

At the time these interviews were conducted, shelter-in-place orders, mandatory quarantine periods, social distancing, mask-wearing, and untold stories of needless sickness and death from a global pandemic were more likely a backdrop to a dystopian novel than our daily lives. College students had not yet been sent home to complete the remainder of their semesters from afar and commencements had not yet been replaced with online ceremonies. Distance learning was an option for students whose lives necessitated the flexibility, not for an entire campus. Parents were not yet confined to work-from-home schedules and locations with their children studying online next to them. And parents of young children, like me, had not yet halted nearly all plans and work in order to assume full-time caretaking responsibilities as childcare centers across the nation closed their doors. College presidents I interviewed in the fall of 2019 and early winter months of 2020 had also not yet been faced with a national reckoning on the ongoing police brutality towards people of color, and in particular, the black community. They were soon faced with unified calls for racial justice as catalyzed by the killing of George Floyd by Minnesota police (Strauss, 2020), and subsequent campus protests that called for the abolishment of campus police or contracts with local police.

The responses of current presidents in this research were often measured, while retirees felt more freedom to share "how they really felt." Some presidents that had recently faced highly publicized or controversial movements mostly provided me with practiced and perfected answers. Those whose experiences were several years in the past shared more openly what they

had learned and would have changed or what they would have retained in their approach to student activists. This reflects what can also be observed in cursory examinations of public responses from presidents (Thomason, 2020) and institutions regarding student and national protests over racial justice issues. Journalists and student activists found that overall responses were somewhat bland or generalized, failing to address ongoing student concerns (McLean, 2020). Historical delays in explicitly addressing racism and racist structures on campus have led to renewed calls to *action*—not just words—by students (Flowers, 2020; Ellis, 2020). All eyes are on institutional leaders as they grapple with which steps to prioritize as necessary to address racist structures on their campuses and higher education as a whole. Whether or not students agree with these decisions, and whether or not renewed commitments are effective in making progress, remain to be seen. While I do not have answers from presidents on this latest set of national student demands, interview data includes examples of racial bias incidents and descriptions from college presidents where they evaluate their own response to student racial justice activists.

The following chapter provides data on the types of movements experienced by presidents in the sample constructed for this study, how these presidents perceived student activists, students' tactics and their effectiveness, and how these presidents responded. The data provided in this chapter answers RQ1: *What role does a president's view of student activism play in their perceptions of student activists and how they decide to handle student protests?* This chapter also provides data on RQ2: *What student movement tactics garner the attention of campus leadership?* The chapter concludes with reflections from presidents on how student movements have changed in the past five to ten years.

Student Movements in the Sample

Student movements referenced by presidents in this study were representative of those that have been experienced across higher education during the past five years which have been described as constituting a "renaissance" of student activism (Wong, 2015). The most commonly cited examples of student activism in this study were related to racial bias incidents, free speech, LGBTQ policies and resources, safety issues and policies, divestment issues, moral/ethical issues (ie. climate change policies for a campus, accepting controversial donations), and academics (cutting funding for programs, phasing out majors). As President Cole, College of the Saints, put it, "whatever the world is fighting about, you get some version of it on your campus."

The types of issues experienced by presidents and institutions varied slightly, depending upon geographic location, institution type, and the institution's political contexts. These examples were not necessarily as sensational as some that have reached national recognition in recent years, but presidents described facing common challenges, student reactions, and campus reception to student activism that was consistent with what has been experienced in high-profile movements, such as the University of Missouri (Kezar et al., 2018). Additionally, three presidents in the sample experienced student movements where one of the demands explicitly called for his or her dismissal. In two of these cases, participants remained as sitting presidents who, for obvious reasons, were reluctant to discuss the specifics of this student demand. In the third case, the former president had recently accepted another leadership position at a new institution, having voluntarily resigned as a result of student protests against her on campus. Interview and archival data showed that, in a few instances, counter movements formed in response to student movements, further complicating the presidential response to original movements.

For simplicity in interviews, I defined student movements as larger student demonstrations where activists made demands of the university administration. In response, President Tharp of Coastal University brought up an important clarification in our conversation and highlighted that not all complaints or ideas are necessarily student activism. She explained further, saying, "what gives us consternation is maybe some approaches or methods or energies around student activism are when students are actually just simply being selfish, narcissistic and dysfunctional and they believe they're being student activists…As administrators and leaders and educators we're actually working to serve the students most effectively. Not everything everyone says is social activism is social activism." She recommended that, as a leader, "you've got to be very careful and thoughtful and compassionate and sensitive about working through that." In her statement, Tharp clarified that complaints directed to the president may sometimes just be complaints, not activism. Yet students lodging the complaints may not immediately understand the difference. Having been a student activist herself, Tharp offered this clarification because she did not want to diminish the importance of student movements by conflating them with individual complaints. A few other presidents agreed and said that they are likely to meet and work with student activists but those making individual complaints were less likely to communicate in a constructive way and were therefore most often unsuccessful in their requests.

Table 4.1 displays the different presidents, institutions, types of movements, and responses by presidents in the sample. The topics in the table are brief; however, these events are illustrated in the complementary descriptions and analysis to follow. Each president described one to two examples of student activism or movements on campus and the resolution they reached related to the examples they provided, noted in Table 4.1. Additionally, the president's descriptions of the general studet population is provided for context. Finally, I have recorded

whether the president himself was a target of the student activism (noted with "yes" or "no") and the intensity of the student pressure put on the campus administration, either "low," "medium," or "high" depending upon whether or not the tactics were conventional or transgressive, and the extent of student participation in the example.

Table 4.1: Student Movement Type, Target, Intensity and Response

Name	Students	Student activism	Pres Target	Intensity	Response
Acosta	Small campus, everyone felt connected, heavy into social issues; Fairly engaged student population; student government communication	Black lives matter; also gender-neutral restrooms (which he had already resolved prior to demands being made)	No	Low	Work with student government; hold town hall meetings with students
Astaire	N/A	Transfer credits within the state system	No	High	Meet with students, faculty, and state policymakers
Cole	Socially engaged; many students working part time, half were first generation college students	LGBTQ policies, art show with false information	No	Medium	Met with students and asked them to prioritize their demands for LGBTQ policies—then resolved systematically; printed out pamphlets to correct misinformation at art show
Copeland	Grateful, thoughtful, respectful	Conceal weapons carry; parking	No	Low	Open forums for campus and student government involvement
Cunning-ham	Engaged and bright students	Racial bias incidents	No	Low	Met with students and issued general statement
Duncan	Rural and mostly white; engaged in conservation and sustainability issues	N/A	No	Low	Said would meet with students to discuss, she thinks activism is important to learning

Fonteyn	Engaged; strong honor system and student peer group holds others accountable; very engaged students in campus leadership also lots of emphasis on community service; also self-governance model for student discipline	Racial justice as related to physical racist structures on campus monuments and response to violent demonstration on campus	Yes	High	Immediately issued statement but not with strong condemnation of hate speech; later met with students on plan of action and set up working group to assess university's response to racist structures and violent demonstration
Fosse	Students from modest means; first generation and Pell eligible, mostly white	Racial bias incidents	No	Medium	Met with students and placed solution back on them; encouraged focus on academic success for minority students
Graham	Very engaged on campus, in contact with president	LGBTQ protest of funding from an anti-LGBTQ donor	No	Medium	Used donor funds to finance women in STEM and LGBTQ center on campus
Hawkins	Engaged, mostly rural	Demands for diversity and affirmative action; sexual assault case where there was a lot of misinformation and false accusation	No	High	Talked to everyone involved and engaged in campaign to clarify misinformation
Hines	Engaged in social issues, combination of merit and need-based	Racial bias incident against student body officer; divestment from fossil fuels	No	Medium	Unsuccessful town hall followed by protests then meeting with provost who agreed to several demands; created special fund and gradual transition away from funds invested in fossil fuels
Horton	25% Pell students, mostly white,	LGBTQ policies; racial bias incidents	No	Low	Meet with student and student

	engaged population in rural area				government (very engaged), implement trainings for student leaders and orientation for all students
Kelly	Engaged, diverse, residential (90% on campus)	Controversial speakers; institutional legacy of racism	No	Medium	Invited opposing speakers to discuss different viewpoints; issued statement to campus and local community. Was proactive in addressing racist legacy and built programming around it with student and faculty input.
King	Online students not engaged but residential students engaged; Christian	LGBTQ policies	No	Medium	VP of Student Affairs meeting; followed by Town Hall w/ President
Limón	Very engaged and proactive students who met with admin about organizing around Ferguson response	Divestment from fossil fuels, Black Lives Matter	No	Low	Met with students to explain barriers and come up with plan, which he then committed to
Nijinsky	Politically active, residential, wealthy, white	Racial bias from campus police, flyers from far-right groups	No	Medium	Day of solidarity, teach-in, followed by a town hall
Nureyev	School functioned more like a private liberal arts institution than public due to its size, location, and program offerings. Students who were quite bright (high SAT scores), engaged and "cared a lot but were very nice." Smaller campus so students were quite engaged	Racial bias (blackface at Halloween) incident; climate change anti-fracking and fossil fuel divestment	No	Medium	Blackface incident initially dodged interview but eventually met with students; climate change met with students to offer more effective alternative than divestment

Pavlova	Two separate campuses so they were different populations, but about 75% on some sort of financial aid	Anti-sweatshop, campus policing and student safety	Yes	High	Meetings with students to discuss concerns, enlist students in the solution and work with Nike on campus apparel
Robbins	Engaged, diverse for location	Budget cuts to humanities programs, free speech on campus	No	Low	Met with students, even came out of office and talked with protestors on his front steps
Robinson	Engaged, very ambitious	Student concerns about a variety of issues including living conditions and community relations, campus police	Yes	High	Focused on messaging and involved students in crafting the response
Rogers	Pell-eligible, no majority racial/ethnic group	Divestment from funds associated with Israel; campus investigations	No	High	Worked with Deans to try and de-escalate; met with students
Shawn	Fairly engaged although not as much as another institution where he was president	LGBTQ policies	No	Medium	Met with students and improved policies through conservative legislature; said it was helpful to have a show of student support
Smuin	Engaged and passionate, rural	Student bill of rights	No	Low	Met with student leadership and organized a town hall
Tallchief	Diverse, thoughtful, commuter but moving to more engaged on campus	Campus safety, racial bias incidents	Yes	High	Issued general response; after continued protests held town halls
Taylor	About 1/4 were residential, urban area, also engaged	Black Lives Matter; racist flyers on campus	No	Low	Met with students and planned out programming, met most demands

Tharp	Rural, residential	Staffing and program cuts	No	Medium	Meet with students and faculty to discuss concerns and help with understanding but didn't concede
Weidman	Small campus, engaged, students from the northwest	LGBTQ policies	No	Medium	Met with students, fireside chats, ultimately changed policies

Some student movement examples span two or more different subjects, for example, free speech and LGBTQ policies, or campus safety and diversity. Movements have been categorized based upon the primary issue as identified by the president. As a reminder, unique details and related archival citations have been left out of descriptions in order to retain confidentiality and anonymity of study participants.

In most examples provided by presidents, the intensity of student activism was relatively "low" or "medium" due to students engaging in relatively conventional tactics that did not escalate, due to resolution with the president or campus representative. Although many of these movements eventually landed on the president's desk, only four instances target the president directly. Cases where this occurred were also concomitant movements where intensity was high due to escalation, high level of emotional involvement on the part of student activists, and/or high levels of public attention. In keeping with rational thinking, presidents were most likely to utilize bureaucratic solutions to low intensity movements where conventional tactics were used.

Addressing Diversity Needs

Movements related to racial bias incidents on campus were often rooted in student body disappointment over insufficient acknowledgement and response to an inciting incident of racial bias. In these cases, student activists made demands of administrators and leadership to address a

general campus climate that allowed for these types of issues to occur and then go unacknowledged by leadership. Demands often included a swift and formal leadership response issued to the campus community, increased student and staff training, increased admissions of diverse students, funding and support for students of color, revised hiring practices and increased hiring of diverse faculty, revision of racist campus policies or practices, and condemnation by the president of racist language or actions on campus.

Incidents of racial bias took several forms: outside groups targeting historically marginalized groups on campus, students targeting students of color, profiling of students of color by campus or community police, or other racially insensitive or damaging discrimination, language, or actions by students or faculty on campus. For President Nureyev of New England State, an incident of racial bias helped surface issues such as the problematic climate for Black students on campus. Nureyev said:

> We had a not uncommon episode of "blackface" on Halloween. This is a small town where the kids do go out and party in the bars and so on, and a couple of African American students, leaders actually, ran into a couple of guys, fraternity brothers…that caused a great deal of trouble and it led to a movement with petitions and demonstrations and a movement that basically started by saying, 'I think that the college wasn't handling this and that,' and then it sort of outed difficulties. Disparate rates of admission and achievement for students of color, retention issues, campus climate issues of a relatively standard sort, need for, we did have an African American or Black Studies curriculum but it was sort of dormant…that was really surfaced.

President Nureyev also admitted that the university's response under his leadership should have been handled differently, a somewhat rare admission of mistakes in my interviews. Specifically, he said, "where I certainly didn't manage it very well was, I dodged a TV interview because they hadn't called my press person and I'm not sure that I or students affairs were out there quickly enough condemning 'blackface.' Although we did condemn it and we did do it." He said that the lack of a swift response to the campus community regarding the incident resulted in student

demands for condemnation of the incident and policies and practices to improve campus climate for students of color. President Nureyev agreed that these students had valid and important concerns and took steps to implement many of their demands.

Some student demands around hiring and admissions were too difficult for presidents to implement, or if they did, it took several years for meaningful change to occur. President Acosta of Kind College, addressed student demands to hire a more racially diverse staff on campus and said that, "[the] hiring process in the university just doesn't move as quickly as—students wanted a certain percentage of hires made in a period of time and we just frankly weren't in a position to do much hiring." President Acosta expressed a desire to implement better hiring practices—which he did—but was unable to demonstrate immediate results since changes would not yield significant new diverse hires until a couple of years down the road, especially at a small institution like Kind College. Additionally, a subsequent merger shortly after Acosta's policy changes kept him from realizing the entirety of changes throughout the hiring process. Other presidents said they faced similar situations, where change in formal hiring and admissions practices or policies were implemented but effectiveness had not yet been experienced or evaluated.

Free Speech

In reflection of recent headlines, discussions, and state policy changes, several presidents cited free speech issues on campus as a source of student activism. Examples included complaints about a speaker with problematic anti-Palestinian views at College of the Saints and donations by an anti-LGBTQ public figure to Astonishing University. In examples from other universities, a controversial speaker was invited by a campus group and shared views and speech that encouraged harm or discrimination toward a segment of the student population. Presidents

who dealt with cases of free speech at live events faced a need for a multi-pronged response. They first had to attend to the legalities of hosting the speaker on campus. They then needed to communicate the university's legal obligations to free speech, any moral or ethical commitments to students, assert a commitment to safety on campus, and work through strategies to minimize disruption to campus during the event. Finally, they had to respond to the surrounding community, as appropriate, regarding safety precautions or warn of the nature of the speaker's content.

At College of the Saints, President Cole's students organized a Palestinian art exhibit with historically inaccurate information about Israel posted as part of the exhibit. President Cole said, "my Jewish students went crazy, but so did all my Jewish groups outside through the city. I was getting free speech on one side, but I was getting 'it's factually wrong' on the other; students were protesting, there were newspaper articles flying, you know, the web stuff going." To reach a solution that he hoped would be acceptable to all parties, President Cole said that he leveraged the strengths of the university and, "asked our history department to actually author for me new text that was factually correct and then I paid for a handout—a pamphlet—to be printed with that language, and put at the entrance to the exhibit. Big stacks of them. So that every person that came into the exhibit got a factually correct one." President Cole said that his intentions were to respect free speech for each student group. He added, "now, notice what I did. I didn't write what was factually correct, I had experts do it because I'm at a university, so I had history experts that were independent. But I didn't take down the language on the wall, either. I countered speech with more speech. In this case, the university's speech. And so, the university has a voice, too." In this example, Jewish students demanded that the language be removed from the exhibit, which in turn incited a reaction from students who had created the art exhibit.

President Cole's response was an example of how presidents can respond creatively, leverage resources, and work to engage all parties in dialogue around issues.

President Graham shared an example of money as free speech when she described how a large donation was made to Astonishing University by a controversial anti-LGBTQ political figure. Students organized and expressed their disappointment in the institution's acceptance of the donation. Graham said she met with these students and, "that was a very important conversation that we had at the time and quite honestly the impetus for the year of diversity and inclusion." She worked closely with LGBTQ students and told me that, "one of the positive outcomes that happened right after that gift, as controversial as it was, is number one now we have more female students in computer science attending and benefitting from symposia…also we have more of our LGBTQ students benefitting from similar experiences so that really makes me feel very proud…because nowhere in the gift agreement was prohibition about us approaching any type of students." The gift was used not only in the academic programs where it had been designated, but also for financing Queer Student Alliance student support and activities. President Graham said that after meeting and discussing this approach with students, they accepted the decision and worked with her to not only apply the funds to their efforts but to contribute their ideas to campus-wide diversity conversations and goals. Astonishing University's response is another example of how presidents can navigate free speech issues creatively and without disenfranchising student groups opposed to controversial speakers or donations.

LGBTQ Policies

Private institutions with current or historic religious affiliations and public institutions in states with conservatively controlled state legislatures faced the most student activism related to

LGBTQ policies. As shown in Table 4.1, nearly every private religious institution in the sample faced student mobilization around issues of the institution's LGBTQ policies. Presidents shared that students at their institutions organized to challenge historic policies that were discriminatory towards members of the LGBTQ campus community. In response, presidents of religious institutions said that they made it clear that they were required to uphold religious norms and the institution's mission while also supporting students who identified as LGBTQ. Presidents in the sample added that their institutions did not discriminate against LGBTQ students in admissions and that it was important to them that LGBTQ students felt safe and supported on campus; but how presidents went about doing so varied.

President Shawn joined Rivers University, a public university, which "did not include sexual orientation in its nondiscrimination statement. It had race and gender and religion and those things but not sexual orientation. My predecessor had resisted that. He did so for, I think, a couple of reasons, one of which was, [region] is a very conservative place and he didn't want to piss off anybody." President Shawn faced a challenge in resolving this longtime struggle, and said that, "faculty, and in particular, students, didn't like it and they did agitate for a change which I had indicated to the board when I was hired that I agreed that it should be changed and that I would find a way to do it. And we did. We got it changed and sexual orientation was added to the nondiscrimination official statement in the university." For President Shawn, the institution was not religious, but the surrounding conservative community and geographic location made it difficult for the institution to enact policies supportive of LGBTQ students. Shawn also expressed that the students' activism for these policies helped him make his case to the state government and said that, "the students were very well organized in support of that and I found them to be a really good aid in getting it accomplished. That's a good example of student

activism where, I liked the position they were taking. It was useful to me for them to take that position."

Divestment

Student demands for divestments since the turn of the century have focused on university divestment from fossil fuels or from companies that do business with Israel. This movement issue was seen across higher education and also in responses from presidents in the sample. President Nureyev, New England State, experienced calls to divest from companies related to fracking and fossil fuels. He said that there were, "demonstrations and requests….so, what happened there was that the leaders of the organizations came in to talk to me and insisted that we divest. Well, we didn't really have any endowment and, besides, the endowment was managed by somebody like the common fund or TIAACref so it wasn't even clear that we had any fossil fuel stocks, I think we did. I said, look, I don't think this makes any sense, this isn't going to get you anywhere." This argument has been made by other presidents in the sample, urging students to expend energy on other initiatives that may have a greater impact on college and university practices related to sustainability and climate change. In Nureyev's case, he met with students to help them understand that the impact on the fossil fuel industry that they wanted would not be met through divestment. He worked with students to discover and implement better routes to emphasizing sustainability on campus.

Campus Safety

Issues of campus safety took two different forms, depending upon geographic area of the institution and current events at the college. The first general campus safety issue was related to the safety and treatment of women and Students of Color, often related to Title IX policies and campus policing. One campus, in particular, experienced issues of campus safety and its

handling of complaints by female students on campus. In this example, which will remain anonymous, campus police failed to respond to a female student's ongoing formal complaints of stalking. Students felt that the veneer of campus safety had been exposed, causing them to organize around campus safety and policing mishandling of the case. Students organized and made demands for greater officer training, accountability, relationships with student organizations, and improved policies for campus police.

President Pavlova of Coastal University also described an issue related to campus policing, when campus leadership was debating whether or not to "arm or disarm the campus safety officers" when she had retired and was on the board of Coastal University. Coastal University "passed a resolution authorizing the president to undertake a consideration of arming some of the campus security officers after appropriate training, of course. Not all of them but some of them. A couple of years later it came to pass. This immediately launched very strong protests from a small number of students who insisted that this was going to lead to tragedy, and that a university should never have armed police…a decision was made to, I think ten people would be armed after suitable training. This created even greater anger on the part of the students who were much more vocal than a lot of students." She said that the number of officers were armed and there was a short time without incident, however, student protestors had contested that harm to students would ultimately occur with armed officers and,

> Unfortunately, tragically it did…it was an altercation outside a local watering hole, they told us, something like one in the morning. It involved an African American man who was armed and who was clearly under the influence of alcohol. Different stories about what upset him, others and so on. Two Coastal University police officers arrived…there you are at one in the morning. A man is brandishing a gun. The police ask him to put the gun down…one of them shoots him and kills him…that led to huge protests of basically walking around campus with placards and pasting signs everywhere and disruption.

Archival research revealed that the Black man was legally carrying a gun than had been in his pocket during the scuffle. The murder of the Black city resident by campus police was painfully similar to other police shootings that gained national attention in the past decade. Students quickly seized upon the incident, recalling their repeated protests and warnings to not arm campus safety officers. Their protests and demands resulted in an internal investigation into the incident, but officers remained armed. Pavlova, who at the time was a board member, said that the president of Coastal University chose to "stonewall it, which did not help. He would disappear in his office and close the door, sort of leaving everybody wondering what to do next." She said that an eventual interim president took over who then, "proceeded to roll up his sleeves and with a cabinet team acquired, wrote out a complete plan for implementing a very responsive, community-based approach to campus safety." However, some officers remained armed, and during the summer of 2020 as protests against police killings erupted across the country, students once again took to the streets to demand that Coastal University disarm its campus safety officers. Coastal's new president agreed with students that campus officers should not be armed and has since moved to disarm its police force.

The second issue of campus safety was the enactment and communication around policies for weapons on campus, including concealed carry policies. At times, administrators were compelled to allow students to carry weapons or concealed weapons on campus, depending on state laws. While it is the responsibility of the president to uphold these laws at the institution, many students expressed discomfort based upon valid safety concerns. Students at these institutions organized in defiance of concealed weapons policies on campus, similar to students in campus who organized the "cocks not glocks" protest movement in Texas, although not as creatively (Dart, 2016). At Tumbleweed State College, President Copeland worked with a group

of students on policies for weapons on campus. She said that the students, "wanted to ensure that they had input on the conceal and carry procedures because they were going to be developed for campus, and that students would have what they would call the final say in policy development…we held several open forums in response but I'm sure the student body president came to see me with those final concerns sort of in writing representing a few students." President Copeland said she, "responded to that by ensuring that the vice presidents had done some open forums and that the conversations were very clear and open with whoever wanted to participate in them and that we would publish what we were trying to do and kept that current in the roll out, which we did." Copeland was receptive to student input even though she was bound to uphold state and local laws related to gun ownership and concealed carry of weapons on campus. In her example, students expressed their concerns over the campus policies and were heard, even within systemic constraints.

Academic

Due to declining enrollments and state funding, many institutions dealt with downsizing or even eliminating academic programs. As expected, those hit hardest and were, therefore, protesting were the students (often encouraged by faculty facing job loss) enrolled in jettisoned programs. Dr. Astaire described an instance in Plains State Systems where programs were being cut. He said that his leaders:

> Did an analysis of majors that took a look at how many students currently were declared in that major and how many had graduated from that major over the last five years. And there were a number of programs where the answer to both questions was zero. So we announced that we were going to suspend the major in a sense that we were going to stop students from declaring those majors because there were clearly not going to be enough students to support the teaching of the advanced classes and as majors, so the students would have had difficulty completing the degree anyway.

Dr. Astaire said he was frustrated by the faculty co-optation of students in the protests and their misrepresentation of which courses would be eliminated. The misinformation shared to students by faculty caused students to organize around keeping majors and general education courses. However, Dr. Astaire was able to resolve the issue by primarily working with faculty who had caused the confusion among students and communicating the changes broadly.

President Robbins, Rookie University, faced state budget cuts that caused him to reduce course offerings and majors in areas where enrollments were low. Again, faculty influence mobilized students, but in this instance, President Robbins chose to work primarily with students on their concerns. He explained that he handled it by, "spending some time with some of those students that were frustrated and again, gaining alignment around the idea that, yes, we want quality offerings, but we want a student who comes to the Rookie University and studies sociology to have the same quality of experience as someone who studies political science, or a language and that requires us adjusting resources based on enrollment numbers." He said that he realized he could not meet all student needs but that even though there was still frustration, "there was at least some understanding of those shared objectives."

Counter Movements

Inevitably, counter movements arose in opposition to students who were advocating for a given position, often a more diverse and equitable campus environment. Additionally, in some cases, there was a student countermovement that surfaced in opposition to campus support of DEI initiatives or organizations, such as DEI activities or speakers or the Black Lives Matter movement on campus. These counter movements were reflective of external current social contexts, such as the "All lives matter" or "Blue lives matter" movements.

In the example from President Horton at Clive College, the faculty and administration integrated issues facing black communities into classes during the initial Black Lives Matter protests. While most students appreciated this acknowledgement and dedicated course time, President Horton also had to respond to an organized counter movement because, "I had some people who saw it as aligning ourselves to Black Lives Matter, for this certain group Black Lives Matter is anti-police, that's what they got, that's all they think about." This didn't mean that Horton abandoned his efforts, but that rather he had to consider the importance of messaging for the countermovement in order to keep it from escalating.

President Shawn, Rivers University, tried to anticipate counter movements by attending to stakeholders he knew were opposed to LGBTQ-inclusive policies. He said that "trustees tend to be more conservative than faculty or staff and to some extent that's true of alumni and donors as well. So, I spend a lot of time trying to explain some of the things, like gender inclusive housing to people, why we're doing that and so forth." Shawn said that this helped gain buy-in from some stakeholders and prevent a counter movement. He said he still struggled with local lawmakers and the state governor when he implemented new LGBTQ-inclusive policies on campus but that it could have been more difficult if he had not anticipated pushback.

Perception of Student Activists

The following section seeks to answer RQ1: *What role does a president's view of student activism play in their perceptions of student activists and how they decide to handle student protests?* Presidents acknowledged that student activism was and has always been part of academia, as captured by President Tharp, who said, "student activism is a hallmark of American higher education since the civil war, it may have been before, it's just better documented after the civil war." The legacy of activism varied across institutions, and some presidents even

proudly touted a history of student activism. Other institutions had fewer student movements over the course of their history, typically due to the mission of the institution and the type of students that attended; colleges serving primarily older and working students, for example, were less likely to have student movements. These findings were consistent with prior research on student activists and resource availability (McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Tilly, 1978).

How Presidents Describe Students

The opening interview question asked presidents to describe all students at their college or university. I asked this question to build rapport but also to hear how presidents described their own students compared to how they referred to student activists. Most presidents were clearly proud of their students and spoke of them as engaged and intelligent individuals. Students at residential, smaller, or liberal arts institutions were most often described as highly engaged and more invested in the campus community by their presidents. President Hawkins shared that Boomerang University students were highly engaged because, "most of the students live on campus, they're involved in clubs." He also compared Boomerang University to his previous university, remarking that "this is probably the best organized and most involved student government of any campus I've ever been on. They really get into the operation of the campus and so they are active but in a very polite way."

Students at prestigious institutions were described by their presidents as more politically active, similar to theories of resource availability for these types of students (McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Tilly, 1978). However, students who engaged in identity-based issues were scattered at institutions of all types, with the only exception being the institutions that were not only PWIs but truly lacked much racial or geographic diversity from their students. These were some of the more rural, state-based institutions. Presidents of religious institutions also described their

students as engaged and respectful. President Cole said that College of the Saints students were morally invested and, "actually think about injustice in life and they're quick to name it, and that's a beautiful thing about them. They've seen a world that's not always fair and they get that it's not fair. And they come to the aid of populations that may not be their own, but they will protest for others because they get that life's not fair. And they don't like that, especially if they perceive that in any way in their own organization, their own institution." President Cole said it was especially unique because many of these students were also working in their spare time, but many still prioritized activism on campus.

How Presidents Describe Student Movements

Presidents overwhelming viewed student movements as positive for students and their campuses. President Copeland, Tumbleweed State College, summarized this perspective when she said, "my past experience in higher education tells me that students generally want to make a difference and do something good. Generally speaking, students are not out to create a malicious malfeasance while they're on the campus…I think for me that sort of lens helps me to think about students as learners, as thinkers, as people who are developing into the next version of themselves and that we want to create opportunities for them to learn, but also for them to create opportunities for others." Copeland expressed that the role of the institution is to foster learning and citizenship, which are both developed through activism. In fact, the top three perceptions of student movements by presidents were that: 1) campus benefits from student activism; 2) students benefit from learning experience and development of leadership skills; and 3) campus activism helps society make progress.

First, presidents believed that a campus was always pushed to be better by its students. While past research shows that it appeared to students that presidents were mostly resistant to

their efforts (Ropers-Huilman et al., 2005), presidents reported positive views of students and believed that most of what activists organized for aided in campus improvement. Students were considered key stakeholders by presidents and what they had to say was valuable. Presidents also observed what was happening on other campuses as a result of student activism and noted the progress. Said President Kelly of Cooperative University, "I know on other campuses really important actions have taken place as a result of student activism. What I hope we can do is work together with students in ways that will bring out the best in everybody. Rarely are we in disagreement about the goods that are at stake. Sometimes we're in disagreement over how seriously we may take those goods because it's not evident for example, by our actions…and also, together we may be able to do things that we could never do alone." President Kelly had a long tenure at Cooperative University and a legacy of working well with students and student activists. He had also been a student at the institution himself and said he felt an additional dedication to ongoing improvement of his alma mater. Kelly was also among the presidents who greatly admired the accomplishments of his students, including student activists. Because of this, he viewed students as partners in building the organization, as he states above. President Acosta, Kind College, agreed with President Kelly that activism led to progress that he had admired on other campuses. Acosta said that, "the presidents I know, and I've worked with…they've been leaders for a long time, but I think they're eager for their campuses to be seen as places where progress is being made. I do think there is a considerable difference today than, for example, when I was first entering higher ed as a student." Acosta went on to say that progress was often due to students asking for more of the administration, either in a way that could be used by the administration to make a case for progress, or to bring their attention to something that had historically been excluded from campus priorities.

Presidents also perceived students as having a strong commitment to campus community, which they appreciated and were eager to collaborate on with students. President Duncan, Harvest College, spoke proudly of her students and their commitment to ongoing improvement of the rural campus. She said that "they were demanding things that they wanted, and they were really positive things. They want to see more engagement in leading the campus." In her example, student leaders took the lead in representing the student requests to the administration. President Nureyev, New England State, also thought that the commitment to the community at New England State was part of why students organized to improve campus. He said, "this is a campus where it is predominantly undergraduates and where there is a strong focus on a sense of community, on a sense of faculty student interaction." New England State students were known by Nureyev as students who would hold one another and the president accountable on issues especially related to diversity, equity and inclusion on campus.

Presidents also viewed student activism as indicative of demographic changes on campus. President Tharpe of Petite University said that it was important to listen to students and improve campus because "there are ethical and moral reasons." With this in mind, she said that "my goal is to leave the world a better place than I happen to have found it sixty years ago. There is also this additional imperative about sustaining institutions. We're in a period right now of probably enrollment challenges and declines or shifts that are projected well into the next twenty-five years. So there's multiple reasons to take very seriously what we're talking about here about how where is that good common ground between the quality of the institution as deemed by the leadership and employees and quality of experience received by the students." Her perspective was that it was not only important to improve the campus for moral and ethical reasons, but also to meet the needs of a changing student demographic. Student activism was one mechanism

students used to express dissatisfaction or feedback and Tharpe said it was important to listen to them. Finally, she acknowledged that colleges needed to adapt and meet these shifting student needs not only for a better campus experience, but for a sustainable campus environment so that there was even a campus to speak of going forward. She believed institutions that did not change with the times were at risk of declining enrollments and, ultimately, closing their doors.

Second, presidents said that student learning and student leadership skills were advanced through student participation in campus activism. Nearly all presidents framed activism as part of the learning experience of higher education. Students were expected to learn how to be engaged citizens of the United States through their experiences in- and outside of the classroom. President Limón said that Miscellaneous College intentionally tried to center this responsibility on campus, since "we've tried thinking about our roles in an educational institution to make sure that students are aware of what their rights are. This is a public university. We have a strong commitment to civic engagement, so we encourage activism and awareness on issues." Students in the classroom were encouraged to learn about issues like social justice and organize outside of the classroom to address injustices on their campus.

Students were expected to gain leadership skills through experiences like student government, academic and social organizations, classroom experiences, and student activism. Presidents anticipated students would regularly organize and make demands of the campus and, generally, this was perceived as a positive aspect of the campus environment. Students also expected to develop leadership skills during college. President Duncan, Harvest College, said of her student activists, "they want to learn to be leaders, they want us to teach them to be leaders." She said that Harvest College faculty and administrators were intentional in encouraging leadership development in students and that:

> We want them to have the experience of making a difference on the campus that will be for themselves, it will also be for students following them. But they're not going to be here that long. What we really want is for them to take this experience of leadership, of using their voices in constructive productive ways into their lives.

Presidents all said that developing students into productive citizens and leaders was an important role of the university.

Third, presidents asserted that society benefits from student activism, which they said happened in two ways. First, activism developed engaged and informed citizens of the country and the world. Second, activist causes on campus have the power to influence policy and social issues outside of the university. President Graham of Astonishing University captured the former when she said that "presidents need to embrace those moments as part of the educational experience, rather than just suffocate that moment…it's part of their training, it is in a democracy. This is exactly the kind of engagement that we want to foster in society." President Copeland, Tumbleweed State College, agreed that the university is responsible for helping activists communicate and construct their case, because "whether that's community activism, wanting to solve a social problem or wanting to solve something as simple as what I was saying earlier about parking or they don't like what's being served in the cafeteria kind of thing. That's all part of learning how to be an active, engaged citizen."

President Nureyev, New England State, emphasized the importance of higher education modeling progress for society, especially on issues of racism in America. Nureyev said that, "Gunner Myrdal called this in the 1940s the American Dilemma. This is the great issue facing our nation. It's an issue of community and it's an issue of a changing world. If we can't, in the controlled environments of higher education make some progress and model some of the progress, then what is the value, other than a very narrow value for higher education?" This level

of responsibility was recognized particularly by presidents who prioritized social justice and diversity work during their presidencies.

Although the perception of student movements was mostly positive, a few presidents shared how either their previous or current perceptions were counter to this positive perspective. A few presidents held somewhat cynical, or they might say pragmatic, assumptions about their students. Their views were similar to what President Tharp expressed, which is that "traditional age college students still come to us as adolescents. They did in 1968 and they're doing it in 2019. Developmentally, freshmen coming in are still high school students plus ninety days. During that freshman year they learn to be calm college students." Because these presidents viewed college students as immature, they sometimes focused on their immaturity rather than the substance of their demands. President Weidman of University of Beachtown demonstrated a cynical perspective of student activists and said, "the issue with students is, they're on campus for four years or so and if you're planning on building…a building or whatever is planned and it's not going to happen while they're on campus, they're going to demonstrate against it. It maybe something that might take a couple of years to materialize…their experience is very short-lived. They don't have the overall picture of a university or a campus." Weidman most often dismissed student concerns as ignorance on the part of student instead of as a teaching moment. He also had limited experience with student movements since only small-scale movements had occurred during his tenure at the small Catholic school. Weidman further demonstrated his cynicism when he said, "I'm old enough, I remember when the Vietnam War was going on. That was the big issue. Now student activism has more to do with more individual issues and individual rights. The thing that bothers me is, students want, are always concerned about rights and that but they don't worry too much about responsibilities." President Pavlova

agreed, describing students who "are all big on their right to do this and their right to do that." Through their words and descriptions, the cynicism of these presidents stemmed from the seemingly self-centered nature of student demands in recent movements.

President Cunningham of Foliage University had served over thirty-five years in presidencies of various institutions. He somewhat revealed his views on student activism when he described Foliage University students as not that active, because they are "fairly middle of the road and don't get off those rails too much." But he also talked about how his views on student movements had evolved over time and said that, "I've changed my views about this over the years. When I was a lot younger, when I was 36 or 37, I would view these kinds of issues as more of a testosterone moment, that someone's testing me and I need to be very much on the line, pugilistic maybe, whatever, now I try to address it in a much different way which is that moving quickly to conversations and moving quickly to explanation, but I also think that you don't let protestors or others deter you from what you think is best for the institution." Cunningham's evolution on the subject also played out in how he communicated with activists. Archival research on his prior presidencies showed staunch resistance to student demands—along with some "testosterone" humor, as he may have put it. However, Cunningham's most recent presidency was marked by collaborative resolution with student activists on campus.

Finally, while presidents viewed the work of student activism as positive, they also said they believed most student movements occurred as a result of breakdowns in communication either between students and campus leadership (including presidents or their executive cabinet members), internally between campus entities, or between students and other campus staff, faculty, or student leaders. In this way, regardless of their support of activism, presidents said that they still thought that student movements indicated some level of failure by the

administration to address campus issues. Additionally, student movements had the potential to disrupt normal campus functions and create a communal sense of unrest. While this is not inherently negative, presidents most often worked to avoid such movements from occurring, engaging in behaviors that they believed would prevent movements, which will be covered in Chapter Six.

Presidential Response

College presidents recognized that how they responded to student movements was important to their credibility and longevity at an institution. As President Tharp said, "presidents don't lose their job, usually, over research dollars. They lose their job over students going crazy and causing a big ruckus, and at the end of the day the students were right." President responses are also important not only for job security, but because presidents represent the voice and face of their institutions. As President Pavlova, Coastal University, said, "the role of the president is partly symbolic but it also—and this is the part a lot of people have trouble with—it's also setting the tone for how to respond. By the president's response, the stage is set for what happens next." Presidents as leaders not only respond with answers or action, but they also model to the university community how a leader responds and what the campus stands for.

Responses indicate that all presidents sought a timely resolution to student movement demands, partly to maintain a peaceful campus but also to be respectful of students and their needs. Presidents were also striving to be responsive through other means, such as student government and student group representatives. Most often, presidents sought to create an inclusive campus that was respectful of students and met the diversity, equity, and inclusion needs of historically marginalized groups. Often the areas of concern where students made demands also contributed to campus success metrics, such as diversity initiatives, academic

goals, or admissions and recruitment efforts. These metrics were goals that many presidents said they were already working on, and many times, student movements were an incentive or catalyst to greater and more swift action.

Data from this study suggests that the traditional blanket narrative of college administrators as oppressors of student activism is not applicable to today's higher education environment, it is much more nuanced. Presidential interviews and archival analysis of student movements at the institutions in this sample also did not show explicit examples of presidents repressing student movements on campus. While there may always be a disconnect between perspectives of students making demands of those in power and those who are actually in power, mechanisms of suppression and oppression as described by Lammers (1977) were not used by today's college leaders. Instead, presidents most often publicly expressed their support of student efforts, whether or not they agreed with their ideology or demands. Presidents said they met with student activists when movements arose and regularly responded by collaborating with students in efforts to prevent escalation. Students may or may not have been satisfied with this type of response, but frequently the movement subsided after such communications occurred, indicating that involved parties reached a level of satisfaction. In cases where progress was made but then either not sustained or communicated, subsequent student movements arose. This happened either as a lapse in communication or in what students felt was tangible action towards progress in their cause and not just rhetoric. Finally, presidents said that they were amenable to student activists because they believed that students had valuable feedback that, when applied, improved campus community and climate.

Lammers (1977) lamented that university policies were not in place to guide presidential decisions, resulting in leaders who were ill-equipped to consistently respond to student

movements. As will be discussed further in the next chapter, interview data suggests that most institutions now have policies in place to guide presidential responses. These policies constrained presidents, at times, but also provided them with appropriate and consistent responses for students. Policies also protected students, administrators and the institution from external political interference. Additionally, policies were originally put in place to ensure greater safety for student protestors and the campus community. Free speech zones and policies regarding time, place and manner gave students guidance on how best to communicate and express their messages. However, a few presidents noted that this new wave of activism has revealed some weakness in campus policies. For example, President Fonteyn faced violent protestors at Southern State University, many of which were not university students. In the wake of the protests where there had been injuries to students and damage of campus property, Fonteyn and students amended campus policy to restrict use of open flames on campus. Other presidents discovered in free speech examples that they could utilize campus policies to restrict attendees at campus events to students only. This tactic helped in situations where controversial or inflammatory speakers sought to draw large, like-minded crowds and potentially incite violence. The following section illustrates how presidents responded to student activism on their campus with a focus on how they worked with students to reach a resolution.

Working with Students

One of the findings from this study was that the model of presidents trying to support, repress or ignore student movements was difficult to unearth—that's not to say that presidents do not respond to student movements in different ways, but that, based upon data, these approaches were not used. Instead, the most common response by presidents was to support or cooperate with student activists. This was the reply when asked about their own examples of addressing

student movements on campus and when asked to hypothetically walk through what they would do when approached by student activists. Responses indicate that this was largely due to the unique insider role of students, and the responsibilities that presidents carried in terms of student development and satisfaction as well as campus culture. Presidents were most likely to resolve student activism issues by sitting down with students in a meeting or town hall setting, trying to work out a way to meet their demands (which usually ended up benefitting the entire campus in addition to the students), and communicating and educating students on what was possible, what was not possible, and why. Additionally, presidents said in interviews that they valued input from students and would try to meet with student movement leadership or participants. Presidents would engage with students to achieve one or more of the following: 1) meet to understand demands and goals of the movement; 2) hold conversations and inform students of possibilities and limitations; 3) clarify misinformation or disinformation; 4) attempt to deescalate movements that had grown into large confrontations, protest movements or even violence; 5) collaborate on a plan to address demands and communicating progress; 6) place some of the work back on students to follow up or enlist students in the solution.

President Robinson of Presidential University summarized many of these themes when he discussed his priorities in meeting with students to work through concerns. He said he most often would meet to listen, empathize, clarify, communicate and educate. He said that it was important to:

> Be aware and, even if you disagree because the facts are different, I think it's always to be aware and empathetic. I think second is to make sure that you educate. You may sound a little bit passive being on an academic campus, but it's part of the role that a president should play but sometimes I think we undervalue the role that the president can play to educate the entire campus about issues and about the facts and so on because sometimes the facts get distorted and I think it's important to make sure that you educate. And then the third thing is to make sure that you are providing solutions. So, the empathy in point number one can't be an empty empathy. It has to be an empathy that has appropriate actions. Now where there's a

> disagreement and there's not a possible solution that someone may feel better about then again, it goes back to number two that you appropriately communicate it and that people are crystal clear as to why you can't do it.

Robinson believed that much of the miscommunication and dissatisfaction surrounding student demands and their resolution could be resolved through empathy and communication. This was shared by many other presidents that used similar tactics in their approach to student activists. The following examples illustrate how presidents worked with student activists to communicate and potentially resolve their issues.

Meet to understand goals. Presidents typically said the first step was to meet with involved students to reach an understanding of the issues and potentially work out a resolution. Students would either contact presidents through email, other administrators, public demands, social media, or the student newspaper. Presidents in this study were surprisingly accessible to students, counter to what I had anticipated. Sometimes, students had already worked with other administrators prior to reaching the president's office, believing that they could not make further progress with administrators. Other times, demands were immediately taken to the president's office without consultation of other campus leaders.

The majority of presidents preferred to first meet with students to better understand their movement, frustrations, goals, and list of demands, as applicable. Some of these meetings were held with students in the president's office, while others were large gatherings where presidents met with student leaders or multiple students in a town hall setting. President Limón, Miscellaneous College, valued "certainly understanding where they're coming from, what is the concern…as president, you want to understand, what are the concerns and then also think always about that educational aspect." President Acosta, Kind College, said that he would always meet with students to discuss demands and give progress updates because, "you make these

compromises, at times, you try to think of creative ways to address situations. In these moments, you usually get presented with very stark dividing lines, 'either do this or you're not on our side.'" He said that meeting with students helped break down the stark dividing lines so that progress could be made.

President Cole, College of the Saints, said he "met with students, generally, if they protested" to collaborate on a creative solution. He said that, "one of the things you have to do in these moments is step back, breathe, and go, 'is there another approach to this?' And sometimes there is, but oftentimes there isn't. And you're stuck with a bad set of choices. But, a lot of times, you can, if you step back and breathe, you can find kind of creative ways of thinking through some of these." He said it was also helpful to come up with creative solutions in collaboration with students, so that he could educate while simultaneously coming up with the appropriate resolution.

President King took a slightly different route when responding to students about changing LGBTQ policies at Grey College. King said that he "decided then after continuing to monitor and watch what was taking place that I would hold a town hall, for lack of a better term, just to allow people to come in and ask questions and for me to respond and also for me to hear from our students that are gay what their experience has been on campus. I wanted to hear. And so we probably had eighty to a hundred students come participate within that town hall. A lot of what I did was just listen and try to get an understanding as best I could of their experience and the perspective in which they were bringing the request." This approach worked well for King because Grey College was a smaller institution with a greater sense of community than some of the larger colleges in the sample.

Communicate and educate. During or outside of student meetings, presidents would communicate with student activists regarding their issues and engage them in the learning process. Presidents and their staff would work to inform students, either of the barriers to enacting their demands, what might work on their campus, or how the institution functions so that students had context for meetings. President Limón of Miscellaneous College said that he had to "make sure that we educate, and I would also add empower students." The small, liberal arts setting of Miscellaneous College also meant that students felt a responsibility to the community, as did President Limón.

Oftentimes, the institution was already working on many of the student demands but had not communicated updates or had not reached the necessary audiences, particularly students. For example, President Fonteyn, Southern State University, in the case of improving campus climate for historically marginalized groups, said that, "most of the things the students were asking for were things that were pretty sensible or things we already had underway and so, they didn't always know they were underway but we were able to sit down and say, look, here's what we've been doing, here's what we're continuing to do and so I think that was probably helpful." President Fonteyn also recognized she had to help students understand the constraints of meeting their demands quickly and how they could potentially work around them. She said that they had already created a "department of African American Studies. That had already been recommended from the university. That was already approved by the board. What we were waiting on was the state board to approve it." They had also already been working "hiring more Black faculty and so on," but it just had taken a lot of time and the administration had not properly communicated updates to students. Because of that, Fonteyn said it "wasn't very hard for me to say, oh yes, that's a good idea, because it was. We had been working on it."

President Taylor of Skyline College said that he tried to educate students on action items and how demands were manifesting on campus in actual numbers. Taylor said when students asked about increasing diversity on campus, he shared his work on admitting more Pell Grant students, and said, "we increased Pell Grants admissions, Pell eligible students seventy percent last summer and then we made even a more concerted effort and we're up thirty six percent above last year. So, when you start talking about the numbers they go, oh, ok. I just tell them, this stuff's for real so it's not just, we're going to do stuff or we're thinking about it, it's really just sort of taking action." Taylor said he built trust with students by taking the time to discuss outcomes and initiatives with them, showing students his respect. Taylor said that, "when they [students] talk about tuition, our average cost of tuition in the summer of eighteen again, when I got here was about seventeen thousand dollars. We'll have it down to about ten thousand two hundred by the end of this year." The common complaint by student activists that leaders are mostly rhetoric and not action can be mitigated through presidential interactions where data and initiatives are shared, as in Taylor's examples.

President Limón attempted to educate students in two ways when a student movement occurred on campus. The first was to educate students on what he believed was the most effective way to protest because:

> You have the right to protest, you have the right to demand change but I really hope and expect in a learning community that we will treat one another with some degree of respect and civility…Part of what I want our students to realize is that when you're trying to effect change, there are more constructive and less constructive ways to do it…we feel it's part of our job to help you to learn how to do this the right way.

Second, Limón believed that part of protesting effectively and respectively was for students to know what they were talking about. He said that if they have not "done their homework to know what is the university currently doing, or what are best practices that are out

there, what are the legal constraints, then I'll say to them, I appreciate your passion for this issue but you're in a university." He elaborated and said that "before coming to us and making a lot of demands, educate yourselves on what's already happening. That's something I think is important, that's where the educational mission comes in to try to help students." This response was shared by two-thirds of the presidents in the study. Student requests were most successful when they approached presidents armed with data, student feedback, proposals based upon best practices at other institutions, and knowledge of what the university was currently doing in a given area. Students who were not prepared were directed to return with more information, at which time the president would be better equipped to consider their clarified requests.

Dr. Astaire also believed it was important to educate students on the functioning of higher education and what was and was not possible to change. He said that there are some things:

> You don't have the authority or the power to do anything about, and so I look at those as educable moments and this is where, particularly in higher ed, this is where we can get into really interesting conversations about, what is it that a president can do and what is it a president can't do, and what is it only a stupid president would attempt to do.

Astaire said that providing student or faculty protesters with context for constraints would help inform more meaningful demands. He went on to say, "only stupid presidents would go and trample all over shared governance issues because the president doesn't have the authority to do that." He added that, "if one of the demands is, you're going to hire the following faculty members, the answer is, even if I wanted to do that I can't because that's a shared governance issue and the faculty have fought for the right to own faculty hiring." Dr. Astaire believed that learning about processes of higher education was valuable to students and that transparent communication could aide in building trust and relationships between students and administrators.

Correct false information. In some cases, student movements grew out of misinformation or disinformation. Misinformation was either distributed via social media, student newspapers or informal social settings. Presidents found responding to these types of movements was especially complex, given that they needed to counter misinformation on campus and also within the local community and interest groups in addition to solving valid concerns associated with the movement. As defined by dictionary.com, *misinformation* is "false information that is spread, regardless of intent to mislead." This means that the information distributed was wrong but the person spreading it was not aware that the information was wrong. *Disinformation* is "deliberately misleading or biased information; manipulated narrative or facts; propaganda." Movements spreading disinformation would be those where internal or external groups may have tried to manipulate students.

I was surprised in interviews that about one-third of presidents shared that part of their responses to recent student movements had been to clarify misinformation or disinformation that led to students organizing. There were both local and national examples of misinformation spreading on campus. In hindsight, it shouldn't be surprising given our current state of social media and distribution of false information. While other means of spreading false information were used, presidents most often said that it originated with social media. President Weidman, University of Beachtown, said that:

> Social media is an issue at times. No question about it. It's great we have that opportunity to communicate and do it so easily but what it does at the same time is it creates, all you need to do is have something false get out on social media and you can't get it back…[or] if somebody interprets it in a way not what you interpreted it at all but if it gets out what their interpretation is again, there's nothing you can do about it.

In Weidman's example of misinterpretation, he shared that he held a fireside chat with students about LGBTQ policies in which he stated that, "there is nothing immoral with being

homosexual, we don't believe that at all. The issue becomes an issue I suppose the same way if you are involved in sexual activity that the church finds problematic whether you're heterosexual or homosexual. I said but, we're not going to go looking for it." Weidman told me he became frustrated because he believed that his intent in messaging was misinterpreted by students after the fireside chat. He said that, "the interpretation we got was, it's alright to be gay at University of Beachtown as long as you're private and nobody knows about it." He was frustrated because, "that's not what I said at all, but once it got out and I had to respond to that, though as I said, you always had to be careful what you had to say." In light of this reflection, following up such meetings with campus-wide summaries may help get ahead of any statements taken out of context.

De-escalate the situation. In instances where protests escalated to disruptive or even violent tactics, presidents said that they attempted to de-escalate the movement as quickly as possible, especially if student safety was a factor. President Limón, Miscellaneous College, said that the priority was first to "keep our students safe, that's a big part of our responsibility." Once student safety was ensured, Limón would then engage students in resolving issues.

President Graham of Astonishing University said that she would try to emphasize mutual respect in relationship with students, "they know that I have been working with them on the topics that are of interest to them. So, when students know that that's your point of departure, I think that the temperature goes down." Graham then redirected their attention because, "then the president can help those students focus on, let's look for a solution in the future. What can we do together? What does the future look like? That kind of positive supportive environment." Graham described using this technique in several instances and recognized that her students

played a key role in building a better campus future, she said this approach resonated with students and kept them engaged.

Make a plan. If action was a necessary step beyond communicate and educate, presidents and students would make a plan to address some number of the students' demands. This response by the president would often integrate, co-opt and issue sell back to the students what the president was willing to do in regard to their issues. President Pavlova of Coastal University said she often used this approach, by "taking a concern of students which tended to be expressed loudly and insistently and with no compromise and finding a way to incorporate it into something comparable that was within our capability."

Dr. Astaire of Plains State System called back to his example of a "stupid president" and providing context of what was within the power of the president. He said that, "there are certain student functions that only stupid presidents try to do something about like student newspapers if they're independently funded. I've looked at students and say, look you wouldn't particularly like it if I ordered you to do some things that you didn't really want. So we ought not to do that to other people." After providing context, Dr. Astaire would then move on to making a plan with students. Referring to the prior example of diversifying hiring but not "trampling on governance" Dr. Astaire said:

> Maybe we can figure out a way to work together, to really sit down and put advocacy pressure on the people who do have, at least on the front end, the authority and the responsibility to develop a pool of candidates, to do the initial interviews, to make sure that they're not hiring people who just look like them. So that we can then, as a result down the road, change the system. But a lot of presidents will just say, I can't do that, and then that's the end of the conversation.

It is important to note Dr. Astaire's final observation, which is that these types of constraints should not be used as excuses for not taking action but rather as invitations to collaborate and be creative in solving systemic issues.

Enlist students in the solution. Many times, presidents enlisted students in the solution to their demands. This was often done to gauge how serious students were about the issue, develop student leadership skills, and/or to improve the campus through student passion and labor. Presidents also believed that it was important to keep up with what students wanted; thus, they would co-opt the student movement and integrate it into normal campus functions so that it was no longer operating outside of campus initiatives.

President Fonteyn decided to involve students in the entire policy-making process following their violent campus protests. She said:

> We rewrote considerably our policies and we invited students in to help us in that policy making effort. All of those policies went before student government, so they had a chance to look at them. We identified new places where people could speak but you know, wouldn't interrupt the hospital or classrooms. We asked the students to give us an opinion about were those the right places and were there enough places and so on. Any student who wanted to be engaged in that could be.

President Fonteyn gained student insight and labor from their participation and students gained a seat at the table in determining campus policies. Fonteyn expressed some cynicism toward the students for whom, "frankly, the fun for them was the protesting. They didn't actually want to do the hard work of re- writing policy so some of them melt away but some of them stuck with it to the end because they were interested and they were maybe in the public policy school or some other area and they had actual expertise that they wanted to contribute. I think that worked really well." President Fonteyn said that both she and the students were pleased with the outcome because, "in the process of doing that, it did have us better prepared the next time there was such an issue because we had a completely new set of procedures including how we set up the emergency operation center, the relationships we had with other police forces in the neighborhood, the rules under which people could come and speak or not speak."

President Pavlova, Coastal University, shared an example from an earlier episode in her presidency when students organized against sweatshops that contributed to the supply chain of Coastal University's apparel. She said that, "the argument became more effective not because of how they approached us. It's because after they approached we suggested it would be good to work together to understand the impact of the problem on both the workers in other parts of the world but also the bookstore because it is a source of important revenues that help keep some other costs to students in a manageable way. It's hard to say just how that shift took place but they decided maybe we were serious about wanting to understand the problem better and we eventually sorted it out." Student voices were important in resolving the issues with Pavlova and not just protesting the bookstore.

Student Tactics

Presidential responses to movements were shaped by the tactics used by student activists. Presidents said that they were influenced by which tactics student movement groups used to gain attention and make demands of them and their administration. In their descriptions of movement examples, presidents emphasized what students had done to get their attention and described the level of effectiveness. In most instances shared by presidents, students made demands of campus leadership but also called upon the president directly to either resolve their issues, meet with them, or resign. Demands or requests were made through a variety of channels: student government representatives, emails, protest demonstrations, student newspapers, or social media.

Although technology has enabled the rapid spread of information (or false information), many presidents said that tactics used by students had remained similar over the years. Dr. Astaire, Plains State System, said that, "fundamentally the principles of the tactics haven't changed very much. We didn't have social media then, but we had our ways of getting

information out pretty fast and demands are demands and bring out press releases and all that kind of stuff. It's just a matter of how you do it." As demonstrated by Soule (1997), diffusion of tactics for anti-apartheid activists occurred via accessible media outlets at the time, such as local and national print and televised media. Social media has sped up this diffusion, but many tactics endure. Student movement tactics like protests, teach-ins, petitions, sit-ins or even taking over buildings on campus appear in prior research and are used across campuses today. Research indicates that effectiveness of tactics varies as does the response from authorities. Tactics are dependent upon the grievances, resources, institutional and social contexts, and the student groups. In interviews, I asked presidents about their experiences with student activists and which tactics were effective in getting the attention of the administration. The next sections will cover tactics the presidents described as effective or ineffective and how they responded to such tactics and addresses RQ2: *What student movement tactics garner the attention of campus leadership?*

Effective Student Tactics

Tarrow (1998) classified activist tactics as either conventional, disruptive or violent. In the majority of examples in the sample, students employed either conventional or disruptive tactics to gain the attention of college administrators or the president. The most common tactic was outreach to campus leaders to make the initial request; this typically occurred through student government or organization meetings or representatives, email, or social media.

President King, Grey College, said that, "Students did not approach me, I think what happened was, students…began to do more of what I would call a social media campaign to raise awareness and to get some attention from those outside of the community but also from members of our alumni base as well." The student tactics were effective in gaining the attention of President King, who communicated with students on "how a group might move forward to bring

consideration on an amendment of the behavioral guidelines…what I tried to communicate was that we're thankful that the students are enrolled, we care for them, that we love them. That we may not hold the same perspectives and views on behavior but that does not mean that we're not proud of who they are and some of the things that they've been able to accomplish. I think that went a long way towards…letting the students know that they were being heard." The social media campaign compelled King to act, and he ultimately engaged with campus leadership to amend behavioral guidelines through "the normative course of the review." In this case, social media pressure raised awareness of the movement to internal stakeholders and peripheral stakeholders like alumni. A number of presidents recognized that changes that occurred in organizing due to the influence of social media. Using a resource mobilization perspective, one can see that social media also takes fewer personal resources such as time or money to engage in a student movement. This ease of communication and participation afforded by social media suggest that perhaps fewer resources are necessary for movement participation, yielding greater numbers of participants.

Presidents said it was advantageous for students to utilize their student government representatives to bring about change on campus, channeling student activism into legitimate and institutionalized processes. This conventional tactic also can be combined with direct lobbying and organized action around an issue to recruit student leaders to the cause, making it more than student government business as usual. While student leaders are hardly as powerful as a university president, their advocacy can catalyze a student movement progress. As proposed by Kezar (2012), the convergence of movement leaders with others in positions of authority can be effective in gaining traction for the movement's issues. President responses show that the recruitment of student government leaders increased the effectiveness of the cause since there are

established relationships between student leaders and campus presidents. Presidents said that this recruitment of student leaders was extremely effective when student movements leveraged the organization to bring awareness and action to their issue. President Hawkins not only had student government leaders that he met with, but also student group representative at Boomerang University. Hawkins shared that, "I have on campus what I call a student cabinet and it has representatives of student government. Representatives from student organizations on campus…when issues would come in where there were particular student demands I think I would call a special meeting with them to get their view on what they thought about some of these demands…that was the first that I would do to try and gauge how much support that's behind the request that's come in." Hawkins consulted this group regularly in addition to meeting with them on incoming demands from student activists. He said that once he had formed this group, he relied on for their insights into student demands. However, prior to identifying student representatives and in his first few months as president, "we did not have any kind of a center for multiculturalism on campus and during the months before I arrived on campus, there were two racial incidents. I immediately got to campus and had a very long list of signatures on petitions that something needed to be done about the climate…I did meet with the students that had submitted these and we talked through what their demands were. I talked to people on campus as well." Hawkins engaged in an information-gathering process prior to his response on which demands could be met. He also enlisted students in the prioritization process and said "they had a long list of things which we couldn't do all immediately. Where were the top priorities? Which ones would make the greatest difference? That's when I tried to engage them in terms of discussions." Following discussions and collaboration, Hawkins had hired a part-time affirmative action officer and director for multiculturalism, both within the first few months of

his tenure. As with President Cole and his work on LGBTQ campus issues, Hawkins continued to communicate progress on priorities and inquire about new initiatives needed to support students and DEI initiatives.

Students petitioned, protested, or engaged in public pressure campaigns to attract a president's attention, especially if they felt that prior outreach had failed. A few presidents shared that students had even contacted them through the student newspaper. President Copeland, Tumbleweed State College, said that, "I actually do get connections with students with complaints or concerns, the old-fashioned way through email. But mostly through direct messaging or on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Sometimes, students will try and communicate with me through the student newspaper. So, if there's an issue that they've seen or heard about and they've seen it on social, they'll tag me on, ask for a response, tag me in posts reacting to other things that they've read." She also said that, "it's rare that a student comes up to the office of the president to talk to me. They're all welcome to and some do." As illustrated by President Copeland, students used informal and accessible tools to contact presidents, but most were online. This was especially true in the infancy of student movements compared to later on when concerns and emotions were heightened.

Many student activists went directly to the administration through established channels. President Limón, Miscellaneous College, shared an example where students came directly to the administration in order to plan a protest together, achieving both the goals of the president to communicate, educate, and help students develop leadership skills but also supported the students in drawing attention to their issues. Limón said, "there are some cases where students come to us where they really are in a position to make a difference themselves. And part of our role is to help them develop that sense of agency and empower them to deal with issues." In this

statement, President Limón is acknowledging his commitment to communicate with students and educate them on the university and activism. He continued:

> When University of Missouri had their severe racial incidents…we had students who wanted to do a protest and express their concerns, but they actually came to the administration through the center for multicultural services. They said, look, we want to do a protest, we want to do a march of some sort. Can you help us think about the most effective way to do this? So we actually talked with them and counselled them about how they could do a march that would gain attention but would also be non-violent. It would be thoughtful and they ended with what you would call a sort of teach-in on the steps of one of our main building on campus.

Limón in this instance supported students in their efforts and actually helped them to plan a disruptive (but non-violent) march and teach-in on campus. He also publicly showed support when "I actually came out to greet them as did other members of the senior administration. We had some wonderful conversations about these issues." President Limón credited the students with the success of the movement because, "that was actually the result of them reaching out and saying, yes, we want to lead this. This is a student movement, but we could use some guidance and feedback and I thought that was a really interesting example." This is a fairly rosy example of relationships between president and students, perhaps facilitated by the small and engaged campus community of Miscellaneous College; however, it illustrates the potential for continued learning and activism through collaboration and not necessarily co-optation of the student movement.

Presidents appreciated and responded positively to student activist attempts to engage in dialogue and collaborate on solutions. At times, this took the form of co-optation of the student movement by the administration, which may not always be a desirable outcome for student activists. In co-optation, student activists lose control over decision-making for the student movement organization, which over time has the potential to diminish effectiveness of the organization (Jenkins & Eckert, 1986). Additional bureaucracy from higher education processes

may also slow down progress on student goals if co-optation occurs. However, some examples showed that in terms of reaching an agreement on demands, allowing for collaboration, support, or co-optation often resulted in a large portion of demands met by presidents. President Tallchief, Desert Rock University, commended students who met with her on campus safety, and said, "I think so powerfully, students that want to be in dialogue and part of change and solutions as opposed to being interested in the optics part of things. I think this is just generally true in life not just in student protests." She expressed that misinformation had played a part in meeting with students because:

> We've had some concerns related to safety on campus and our students have expressed their voice not always with all the information in hand. That's probably been a little more thorny but, generally has been navigable on the information sharing sit down, listen, design it, understand what the core issues are and work on designing solutions together in addition to educating and providing information about all the things that have already happened and been done.

President Tallchief admitted that some of the misinformation was due to her administration not sharing information in a timely manner, which allowed assumptions and false narratives to take root. However, she felt that the subsequent communication with students resulted in a positive outcome for all parties, since they held the common pursuit of greater campus safety. Tallchief said that she thought that the "most effective voices of student, faculty, staff and community are the voices that are in a partnership on change and advancement as opposed to the demand our way, X. Because it just seems that invites an unhealthy throw down."

President Cole, College of the Saints, said he "had student protests of multiples every single year" and shared his favorite example of effective student organizing tactics. He stated:

> My opening day on the job, I have the student LGBTQ leadership show up in my office, uninvited. And say they wanted a meeting with me. So I took the meeting. I sat down with them in the conference room and they presented to me a study they had done, not just a petition, but a study, of what our LGBTQ students most wanted. And it was fantastic! It was really well done and they had been working on it in advance of the new

> president coming, and they wanted to give it to the new president on day one. I'm reading through it, and I'm just going, 'this is really good work!'

The professionalism of the student organizers, in addition to their taking advantage of the change in leadership, helped catalyze their success with President Cole on his first day of the presidency. He told me that in working with student activists he takes a step-by-step approach:

> I meet with them, and I generally meet with my protesting students over all thirteen years. Two, I ask them a question. As I read through it with them at the table, I said, 'all right, tell me which of these items I should do first.' And what I was doing was two things: I was indicating a commitment to work with them but I was also managing their expectations. It was a long list, there was no way I could do everything at once, so I was asking, 'what do you want first?' and so they said they wanted benefits for the partners of our employees—health benefits—which College of the Saints didn't do.

President Cole said he worked with the university, students, and church leadership to meet the first demand set forth by students. He was so impressed by the students' presentation that he continued to refer back to it in meetings with them, "every time I did something, I referred back to the study. So, people always heard that the students were driving this and that I was listening to the student voice." President Cole's example was not the only instance where student activists had taken advantage of a change in leadership to share demands. Several others shared instances of students approaching them in their first few weeks on the job. Often, this occurred because the last president had failed to deliver on important student issues. Other times, student leveraged a newly appointed and engaged president to build relationships and enact new policies. Based upon presidential responses, this was an extremely effective tactic for student movements that had been stonewalled or had stagnated in their progress with previous college leadership.

When students believed that conventional methods had failed, they typically transitioned to disruptive, attention-grabbing tactics. This most often took the form of disrupting Board of Trustee meetings, marching and protesting on campus, or creatively demonstrating in a way that disrupted normal campus life (like a "die-in," for example, where students would lie down in an

area of campus to represent deaths due to police violence). In the example of campus safety officers shooting and killing someone, President Pavlova of Coastal University said that student activists "came yelling and screaming, holding up placards and disrupting trustee meetings." The disruptions brought greater attention to the issues but it wasn't until a new president was installed that demands were truly agreed upon between activists and the administration. Disruptive tactics were sometimes cited as effective, but most often preferred to work with students who had utilized conventional tactics. Disruptive tactics such as marches and protests were seen as effective by administrators and not so disruptive as to be a nuisance, but rather a healthy aspect of campus and free speech. However, if any disruption devolved into violence, presidents were quick to condemn violent tactics.

Ineffective Student Tactics

When asked in interviews about student tactics, presidents most often defaulted to discussing effective tactics rather than what was ineffective. In general, presidents identified as ineffective tactics any sort of violence, refusal to collaborate or compromise, or lack of follow through on the part of the student activists. President Copeland, Tumbleweed State College, said she found violent tactics ineffective and that they were most often the tactics of non-students and "it's usually other people that co-opt students and so you get a mix of people. Usually, when people are banging down windows and setting things on fire or other sorts of ruckus, it's a whole combination of audiences and not just students." Other presidents said that violent tactics were ineffective because they were not reflective of tactics actually used by students. They were most often the result of external campus groups targeting student activists, either by co-opting their movement or responding with violence to student movements. Disruptive tactics that were also disrespectful but not necessarily violent were ineffective to presidents. The common example

shared by a few presidents was students disrupting a campus speaker during a live event. President Copeland said that, "I think it's also important as the president to role model that out-shouting people or acts of violence are not appropriate means of communication and are not acceptable in a campus and do not provide opportunities for progressive conversation."

Additionally, Dr. Astaire, Plains State System, said that refusal to speak with him (either by student or faculty activists) was an automatic rejection of their demands and that, "in general people really don't like it when somebody comes in, makes a bunch of demands, and then refuses to talk, and then you get the high ground and you can then just sit there and then see what happens." Astaire viewed student movement demands as an opportunity to learn and collaborate, and those who weren't willing to engage in the process lost their chance to make changes on campus. Dr. Astaire also said, "I've encountered advocates who were just out there as professional advocates and they're not about the outcome, they're about lobbing grenades. And if that's what they want to do, then I'm not interested cause it takes two to do that. And then I will just say, fine, I'm not going to play your game." Students must engage in a way that presidents perceive as productive in order to gain the respect, trust and commitment of the president to their cause. This engagement complements the priorities of the presidents to educate, develop student leadership, and improve campus for students.

Response Timing

Student tactics and presidential preferences for responding added pressure to the delivery of the response, in particular, how quickly to respond. Social media pressures and expectations today add to the tension built up by student movements, which compelled some presidents to issue responses before they had a complete narrative of the issue, a helpful response, or

resolution. Interviewees were asked how they determine how long to wait before responding and, additionally, their approach to timing their response.

When asked about timing his response, President Nijinski, Proactive University, said it was hard to generalize because, "it really depends on what the issue is, the timing of the issue, what's the background. Sometimes instances are sort of the proverbial, the straw that broke the camel's back, and so you have to recognize the context." He said that contexts such as external social events, timing during the semester, personalities and charisma of the student movement leaders, and even the weather are factors. He also emphasized that this was why it was important to keep abreast of student concerns on campus so that the moment he described does not come to fruition. President Cunningham, Foliage University, said that he always made a point to be quick and transparent in his response to students, and to share information widely. He said he would, "immediately address it and I always tell people that if those who are protesting or complaining know what I know about the situation, they would make the same decision. And so, it's a matter of getting people the information." Cunningham would ensure his response was accurate but said he often would not wait too long before distributing a response.

President Shawn of Rivers University said that he also would "try to respond very quickly. In retrospect, I think that I responded too quickly, that I should have maybe gotten a little bit more informed and maybe just let things cool a little bit. Sometimes they take care of themselves, you don't have to solve it or respond to it immediately." He also cautioned about too much of a delay in responding because:

> You can't wait so long that it appears that you're caving into accumulating pressure, that's not good either. It makes you look just like you're maybe a little out of touch and not on top of things. So, that's a delicate one. I think it needs to be prompt but it doesn't need to be hasty.

He agreed with President Cole that it was important to ensure accuracy since, "your first response is the one that's going to stick with you and it's the one that's going to define you so that's why I think it's important to get some staff together, maybe even get some students together…and see what people think. It's particularly hard to undo something that you say. You can always layer on to something you didn't say."

As evidenced through interviews and archival data, the greater social media or national media attention given to a movement, the more urgently presidents felt they needed to issue a response. The longer an issue went uncontested—especially on social media—the greater reputational threat to the president and institution. Highly publicized issues also compelled a more urgent and well-orchestrated response from a president. President Horton of Clive College experienced an incident that quickly spread from campus to the national stage when a story about students having conversations about white privilege on campus "got all the way up to Bill O'Reilly and Fox News and it just went everywhere." He was concerned because they "had people in the United Kingdom emailing us and, of course, the story got twisted, it was like all students were being required at Clive College to indicate white privilege and so on." Horton said that, "we defended the right of the students and we kept explaining, students have a right to have a campaign, this is purely voluntary, and it's a form of free expression…but we were just getting inundated. We had threats to campus." In order to protect the safety of students in addition to the reputation of Clive College, Horton then:

> Hired a public relations firm to handle crisis management and in effect, where is this going to go…the way it ended was, luckily our political science professors, again this is a virtue of a small college, they were the faculty advisors to the College Democrats, College Republicans and the Young Americans for Liberty…and they got together and I don't know quite how they did it, but they hammered out over two hours and they wrote a statement.

The statement spoke to the student activism and the external activism against the white privilege activity at the college. Horton told me it said, "we may disagree but all of us defend the right of the College Democrats and other students to express their opinions as they wish… and we're going to have a conference on campus to discuss this." He disseminated this message and "blasted it out on the web, got it up on the website, blasted it out every place we could on our website…and the media barrage and incoming email and texts and everything else dropped like a stone." The institution was then able to handle the internal student activism and counter movements through a series of conversations between the different political groups as well as inviting speakers on the topic to campus.

President Taylor of Skyline College said his experiences as a business school dean and serving on public company boards of Fortune 500 companies helped shape his responses to student movements. He said that when communicating, "there has to be a consistent message, but you also learn that you really truly have to be good and fast in terms of what you do…good governance is about being inclusive…seek people's input and then make a decision." Specifically, President Taylor believes that input should come from students. He said that he thinks that higher education has changed directions in the past few decades and "it's about being truly, truly student centered, so what's in the best interest of the students. How can we get them involved?" In his examples and hypothetical response to student activists, President Taylor involved students in the collaboration and execution of the changes they demanded. Regarding responsiveness, he believed in a swift response because, "in my opinion, and I've told this publicly, you see a lot of presidents who get into trouble because they're kind of slow and not really responsive." This was a common criticism of recent movements that had been highly

publicized and although presidents often did not want to name specific examples, they commented on trends like Taylor.

A couple of presidents expressed frustration that the demands of keeping up with social media were unrealistic, and although a swift and accurate response was ideal, it couldn't always be achieved due to the timing of actual events. President Fonteyn shared an instance where a Black student was arrested because, "in my opinion, he was assaulted by a group of alcohol and beverage control officers. He was so badly hurt with a head injury they had to take him to the hospital for stitches." She added, "it happened at about two in the morning, right before the bars closed…the first message I got from students hit my email about three in the morning but I was, you know, asleep." Fonteyn expressed frustration that students had organized via social media in mere hours during the middle of the night. She said when she woke up she checked her email and "students were demanding, why hadn't I done anything yet?...I didn't know about it yet, but as soon as I realized what was going on I picked up the phone and called the Governor." President Fonteyn prided herself on responsiveness and was at a loss because it occurred while she was asleep and, "sometimes students don't understand that. They're up through the night, they don't know."

In the case of the student movement pushing to update LGBTQ policies at Grey College, President King said that:

> We've found that responding on social media is white noise and it doesn't do any good. So what we did was we initially put out a communication to our faculty, staff, and our students so to the university as a whole put out a broader statement…as a reminder of why we have the behavioral guidelines, from a theological doctrinal perspective of how we arrive at those community covenants and also a reminder that those that are in our community, even if they're not in line and don't agree completely with those behavioral commitments, we are to love and care for each person of our community.

King said that the broader statement actually was not an adequate response, and that some of the message was actually "misconstrued" and pulled out of context. To clear things up, he decided, "I'm just going to do the town hall, I'm just going to come in and sit down and let our students see my heart and my perspective within this." He thought, "it's a little bit easier to understand what's being communicated face to face than it is in a written fashion." Following this incident, President King said that he preferred to hold town hall events with students when possible.

Dr. Astaire, of Plains State System, disliked the pace for a response set by social media. He felt it enabled people to get involved who may not have been serious about their demands. Dr. Astaire said that when he asked for more time from some student groups, "in the age of Twitter and all the rest of that kind of stuff, not everybody likes that." He added that:

> If what you want is fair and equitable treatment, then you need to demonstrate that by giving me at least time to read it. And if you're not willing to do that, then that changes the order of things. And that's one of the signs, to me, that this is more about theater than it is about substance. I've never encountered anybody who was really serious about making change happen who wasn't willing to do that.

For students seeking true collaboration and resolution on their issues, Dr. Astaire's response suggests that it is an effective tactic for activists to wait patiently for the president's informed response and not put undue pressure on an accelerated response.

In the example of blackface at New England State, President Nureyev critiqued his own response on the issue, and said that he learned he should have gotten in front of messaging to students and community members sooner. President Nureyev said that he and his press person were incorrect to choose to wait on their response and to not agree to an interview by a local television station. Several other presidents noted that it was important to quickly issue a response to incidents or student movements even if the response is that presidents are looking into the incident and seeking more information. Presidents sought to strike a balance between

responsiveness, mode of response, and accuracy of information. Too rushed and there may be irreversible inaccuracies or embarrassments. Too slow and students may think their demands are unimportant to presidents or that their tactics have not been effective. Too slow and frustration and dismay can build, escalating emotions and disruption on campus. Presidents considered all of these factors in making their decisions and while they said they mostly got it right, sometimes they made mistakes that had to be communicated and corrected.

Recent Changes in Student Movements

While many presidents said that tactics had not changed much beyond the advent of social media, they did believe that they had witnessed changes in student movements in the past decade. Presidents were encouraged to compare to their previous experiences as students, faculty or administrators, and previous presidential tenures, as applicable. Most presidents agreed that there had been a resurgence of student activism in the past five years or so in higher education. They said that students were most often organizing around issues of social justice and ensuring equity of historically minoritized groups on campus. Several presidents believed that changes had occurred due to greater expectations of the institution by students, therefore holding the institution more accountable to meeting the needs of increasingly diverse student populations. Additionally, the demographic changes and generational changes on campus were resulting in a new student population that held these greater expectations for higher education. Finally, presidents recognized how the advent of social media in the early turn of century and its exponential growth in usage across platforms over the past five years had changed how students approached activism.

President Fonteyn noted a change in the university's response to student movements, in Southern State University's police had become more sophisticated in their relationships with

students and communities, which ultimately resulted in greater student safety. Fonteyn said that police are "not throwing tear gas anymore. For the most part they're not coming in riot gear, California might be an exception. Instead, they work on the principles of community policing." She said that, "in our case at Southern State when there was a march, police officers would march with you. Not to keep you in check but to protect the marchers from drivers and others who were passing by." She said that leaders and campus safety officers have "a whole different attitude toward the protest. These are citizens. They have the right to protest just like other citizens do and our job, as long as the protest is peaceful is to keep it inbounds." This was the preferred and accepted approach except, "when the protest stops being peaceful, that's when it has to change." However, Fonteyn also acknowledged that many of the more disruptive or violent protestors were from off campus and that often the people became concerned with student safety in the face of external violence on campus.

Resurgence

Presidents noticed changes in student activism at their own institution in the past five years, in addition to citing other instances across higher education where student movements had gained momentum. Some, like President Shawn of Rivers University, contrasted the past five years with his experiences ten years prior. He said that:

> Between 2005 and 2010 when I was president [of another institution] that was not exactly a heyday for student activism. There weren't a lot of national issues that captured the imagination and the fervor…my experience with students, on the ones we agreed and the ones we disagreed on was actually quite positive. I didn't have sit-ins. I didn't have any violence. I didn't have anything that I would regard as any kind of dangerous behavior, I never had that to contend with.

President Shawn said that as contention about issues increased nationally, he noticed changes on campus, with student activism increasing. President Duncan, Harvest College, agreed that there was "a lull in social activism and in engagement with important social issues and I think it's

definitely come back. There are just so many stories every day about students responding to what they see as injustice or unacceptable practices." Duncan found this resurgence in activism inspiring and sought to cultivate greater student involvement on campus, particularly in sustainability and conservation. She said, "the whole 'me, too' movement has energized and empowered a whole generation of men and women. I definitely think we've seen a growth in student activism." She expressed great optimism for student activism and was "kind of hoping that our students are going to start taking me up on an invitation to be much more engaged in greening the campus and addressing…environmental sciences where they're doing all kinds of environmental (research)."

President Copeland, Tumbleweed State University, said that in addition to a resurgence, she noticed a change in the types of issues that students organized around. She said, "I think we saw over the last four or five years a real rise in campus climate, campus environmental issues. Some focused on people of color. Some focused on people who identify as a member of the LGBTQ+ community." She said she had also noticed increased political involvement on campus coinciding with the rise in student activism. There were greater efforts to integrate students politically into the local community and vice versa. Additionally, she said increased media literacy and debates about bias, misinformation and respect had ignited student movements on campus. She also lamented that some groups had taken their debates too far because, "what people believe is acceptable behavior, I think, has changed." President Tallchief of Desert Rock University agreed that she had been faced with new issues around student movements. She, like President Copeland, had seen "more activism on racial equality, equity diversity issues than any other." Tallchief also said that while the activism she observed nationally was continuous, activism on Desert Rock University's campus was tied to direct events on campus. She said that,

"it certainly seems that if I'm looking at a national landscape, I'm seeing a bit more activism." At her campus though, "it's been a bit episodic, maybe a little bit more. I think the issues seem a bit different, though our activism related to safety is new."

Student Expectations

Presidents described students that had greater expectations for their institutions and if their institutions let them down, students spoke up. President Tharp said that:

> Students' expectations of their college experiences and their treatment have evolved as well. There's a constructive conflict in friction that's kind of part of higher ed by nature. I think actually some conflict is really good. Some conflict can create energy that moves people, students to do great things. It moves faculty to teach great things.

Tharp believed that the higher expectations set by students resulted in greater accountability and quality in teaching, learning, and student support from higher education institutions.

Greater student beliefs of institutional accountability also meant that students were less willing to tolerate discriminatory or inflammatory behavior on campus and expected the administration to respond swiftly to condemn such acts. For example, President Horton of Clive College said his approach to working with student activists "evolved over the time I was president," as their expectations and demands changed. He continued:

> I've talked to people who were staff members and faculty in previous years and they said, frankly, if you look at graffiti that used to be seen in a campus room somewhere or in a classroom at night or something like that, people would say, oh that's disgusting and wipe it off. But the threshold has changed, which is good, to say this is awful. Nowadays people with iPhones, they take a photograph of it, send it to campus security and said, I saw this in this hall, and this is pretty awful, here's the date and time and so on.

He contrasted prior brushing aside of these incidents to present day, and said students have "heightened awareness and less tolerance for whatever it was, homophobia, racist, sexist…I don't mean to downplay the fact that it happened on our watch, but some of it was just people saying, 'we're not going to put up with this anymore.'" In Horton's example, increased student

expectations led to greater response and accountability by the institution and its president. President Horton said that Clive College had had a couple of recent incidents with offensive white supremacist flyers posted on campus by and external group where they "were able to identify who had done one thing, it was a non-student, so we gave them a no trespass order and they can't come to campus." President Nureyev also recognized these changes and thought that they were even more noticeable at historically active, liberal arts colleges. He even said that, "I don't know whether I could handle the kind of demands you get now, especially at elite private liberal arts colleges…places like Oberlin for example." Nureyev said that the "cross cutting of racial issues" with other issues on campus was especially challenging, given the necessary systemic change that could be hard to achieve short-term.

President Tharp agreed that students were changing demographically, but that the issue of institutional accountability was the most important to supporting students and, ultimately, to an institution's survival. When asked what has changed in recent years in regard to student movements, President Tharp said, "what's changed though—which I'm thrilled about—is students' expectations have evolved and there's greater expectation for safety. There's greater expectation for social. There's greater expectation of self-actualization and so I love it because they're right." President Tharp's observations particularly ring true for historically marginalized groups that had been underserved by their colleges or universities. Tharp said:

> When a student says, hang on a second. I am a woman of color, first generation, and my family comes from very modest means and you recruited the heck out of me to come here. I came here and I feel like the moment I got here you forgot about me. Or actually, you didn't just forget me, now I see all of these barriers and challenges to my being able to achieve why I chose to come here. Well, why wouldn't somebody be angry about that? Forty, fifty years ago, people weren't angry, they were shamed into believing that they were the problem.

Tharp believed that institutions should have to deliver on their promises to prospective students, particularly students of color. The recent shift to students holding the institutions accountable for under-delivering on these promises was overdue, according to Tharp.

President Cunningham of Foliage University attributed changes in student perspectives to generational differences rather than student demographic changes. Cunningham said he observed that, "I actually think that we're going through a very interesting period, so I tell everyone that the gap between my generation and X generation was relatively small and those gaps continued to grow a little bit." He said that he thought "the gap between the millennial generation—which we just educated—and the Z generation is absolutely a chasm and so I think that part of the issue…is how do we deal with this new group of people coming in?" He said that a president should be considering these shifting demographics and student paradigms because "they think much differently, they act much differently, they are much different from the students we've just recently graduated. And so that's constantly a process of reinvention."

President Pavlova of Coastal University disagreed that much had changed in recent years in terms of student activism. She shared that, "I've not personally seen anything that caused me to think it's changed." Pavlova also acknowledged that it did not mean activism had not changed but clarified that "both through direct operations and reading about them in the Chronicle [of Higher Education], all have a couple of things in common. Anger, attempts to ramrod a solution. Disarm or disinvest or remove everything." She said that instead the changes she had noticed were:

> Changes in the composition of campuses, shifts…[students] vary in their ethnicity or particular culture they identify with or their approach to sexuality. A disability, and so there's more breaking apart in the process of trying to find a new community that works well for recognizing difference within the commonality of beings…Different lessons learned from that and therefore different concerns that are going to shape people's experience is getting clearer.

Pavlova added that changing demographics and greater acknowledgment of differences "may affect students trying to be part of changing things to make them more habitable." She believed that these student efforts toward creating better space for those with differences were important to institutions meeting student needs and maintaining growth and progress.

Social Media

Presidents had several observations about how students expressed their activism via social media; they noted important changes in how information was disseminated among activists, how presidents were contacted, and how student grievances were expressed. As noted above, presidents also said that they felt greater pressure to respond quickly due to social media. President Robinson, Presidential University, said that he thought activism has "changed more because of how it's expressed. I think when I look at social media in particular, that pervasive use of it has changed it significantly. It has made it a very fertile breeding ground." President King of Grey College agreed with President Robinson on the proliferation of social media changing student movements. He said:

> Social media has changed the way that social activism takes place. It doesn't mean that there's not a group of students that will gather together and put up banners around a certain topic or an issue to gain awareness but, you don't see that nearly as much as, if something like that happens it's because there's been a push on social media that comes together for that purpose.

King went further, asserting that, "social media really has become the platform for expressing dissent around any topic." Whether or not students had contacted presidents via social media, students were engaging with each other and with the issues on social media, which in turn shaped the tactics and the movement. President Robinson believed that social media had also changed some of the motivations around student activism, making it more performative than it had been in the past. He said that:

> I think people are more sometimes obsessed with protests than they are with understanding what the activism is about. I think the ability to hide behind a tablet or a phone and say things that are beyond the pale has also kind of de-humanized that experience as well and also diminished the role that the emotional impact that an issue may have and the damage that it may do in a humanistic way can be lost. I think all of that is unfortunate that we've now set up a system that does that.

Robinson valued tactics of student activism that were more conventional, although disruptive tactics that he believed were sincere were still beneficial.

Social media also played a role in the spread of disinformation or misinformation, increasing the need for presidents to clarify false information in their responses. Additionally, social media allowed for student activists to organize more quickly. President Fonteyn of Southern State University said, "I do think that social media has changed it a lot because it's much easier to get a rally gathered together in a hurry sometimes with inadequate information but, you can send out an inflammatory tweet and get a lot of people gathered together in a hurry. So that's one thing that's changed." Generally, social media changed how students shared information, what information was shared, and how quickly they were able to organize.

Conclusion

Presidents in the sample represented the variety of student movement issues facing colleges and universities across the United States in recent years. As campus demographics and student expectations for higher education change, campuses must also adapt their policies and practices at a commensurate pace to meet student needs. If these needs for supporting historically marginalized students were not met, student movements inevitably organized to ensure that actions were taken. In particular, student organizing around issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion created challenging but necessary political opportunities for presidents to collaborate with students on resolutions.

Presidents mostly responded positively to student movements, compared to examples of repression or oppression by authority figures in higher education of the 1960s and 1970s. The most common response to student movements on campus was to meet with students about their issues and to facilitate learning and leadership development for students. Nearly all presidents perceived students as talented, intelligent, and progressive in their demands. Presidents responded positively when students were interested in compromising on solutions and collaborating to enact new programs, practices or policies. Students who engaged in conventional tactics and reached out directly to presidents via email, social media, in person, or even through the student newspaper were invited to meet with presidents and appropriate cabinet members. Those groups that sought to disrupt or engage in theatrics solely for the purpose of disruption were not received well by presidents, who often declined to meet with them.

Presidents believed that student activism benefitted both the students involved, those not involved but who benefitted from improved policies or practices, and the campus as a whole which was constantly pushed towards improvement by each new group of entering students. It was important to presidents that they issue quick and accurate responses to student demands because they were necessary to retaining positive relationships with students and a peaceful campus. Broad statements were acceptable for initial responses, but more detailed plans of action were necessary for student trust and to prevent the continuation or escalation of student movements on campus. These statements were usually distributed internally through campus communication channels but were external if media attention required an additional external response. Presidents said that frustrations would inevitably build if incidents or activism went unacknowledged by them or their staff.

Presidents confirmed that student movements were entering a renewed period of student engagement, as escalation of national tensions and issues have resurfaced on campus. Students have organized to address these issues, particularly around those that affect historically marginalized groups on campus. As student demographics have changed over the years, colleges have struggled to meet the needs of increasingly diverse student populations. Student movements have resulted as student expectations of institutional accountability have grown, pushing both institutions and their leaders to do better. Finally, the advent of social media has changed how student dissent is expressed, how student groups organize, and how campuses choose to respond and when to issue a response. Presidents have noticed that social media has increased the proliferation of false information, and their quick response is especially important to keep such information from spreading.

Chapter 5 President Responses in Context

Corporate leaders, government officials, or college presidents do not operate outside of the system of their industry or outside of society. Rather, they are individuals embedded within an organization, which itself operates within a system, which is further embedded within the broader social contexts. One dependency cannot be divorced from the other. Cole and Harper (2017) cited institutional context as a determining factor in the favorable or unfavorable reception of a presidential response to racism on campus. Researchers have also concluded that institutional contexts such as history of activism, student demographics, or institutional prestige are indicators of student activism. Therefore, such factors are likely to influence a president's response to student activists on their particular campus. It also is paramount to expanding our knowledge of student movements to understand the internal and external contexts of an institution and how those contexts affect the decisions and approaches used by college presidents in responding to student movements.

The following chapter focuses on the importance of context in presidential decision-making related to student movements where consideration of time, place, politics, and regulatory framework is necessary. Findings are organized by RQ3 and RQ4, which relate to external and internal contexts. RQ3 asks: *What external social contexts, such as political climate, town-gown relations, or current events, inform presidential decision-making regarding student movements?* The first section addresses this question by discussing relevant external social contexts that shape presidential decisions. The section begins by providing data on how presidents weigh external political forces in their decision making, particularly the influence of the local and state

government officials and policies. These political contexts varied by institution type; therefore, the data is disaggregated into public institutions and private institutions. Additionally, there were unique cases, like at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), where federal policy has an outsized influence on the president's response to student activists (White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities, 2020). Next, I describe how external media and social contexts—which were touched upon in the previous chapter—affected presidents' thinking on a movement and their response. Finally, I provide interview data on how "meddling" on campus by external groups affects presidents' reactions to a given movement.

Following the section on external contexts, I turn to address RQ4: *What institutional contexts inform presidential decision-making regarding student movements?* I first cover interview data and analysis on the variances in presidential responses based upon institutional type. Presidents often based their response on the type of institution they led, particularly whether or not it was public or private, or had a current or previous religious affiliation that governed the institution's mission and goals. Next, the types of institutional governance and its relationship to presidential decision making is provided, followed by the influential contexts of institution size, student demographics, and geographic location. Last, the association of academics and institutional prestige and presidential decision-making is considered. The chapter concludes with a summary of the most significant contextual findings.

Context Matters

An outside observer might have thought that President Fonteyn of Southern State University was attempting to keep student protests out of the media in order to protect the institution, or herself. The university had recently garnered national attention for the violent events that transpired on campus. Student safety had been threatened, racial bias issues

exacerbated while racial bias incidents increased, and demands from the students had been met with what they perceived as delays and avoidance. Internally, the president was weighing how to approach the Board of Trustees and national news in responding to students. No stranger to sometimes incongruent and even unreasonable demands from the Board, Fonteyn attempted to resolve student demands as much as she could without involving outside parties. She shared with me that she felt protective of the university and that it was "operating in a climate in which there are many people who are totally unsympathetic with the student protests and who immediately demand that I expel any student who is protesting…that's not consistent with our role as an educational institution." She opted to work with students as much as she could, while tamping down their calls for greater publicity, which may have appeared to students as an attempt to hold up her response to their demands. However, given her past experiences with a confrontational Board and unsupportive legislature, she decided it was more important not "to expose the students to that kind of reaction from the outside world…they would like to get publicity—I would like to keep it a little quieter. I'm actually doing it in part to protect them." While the violent events on campus had erupted in national headlines, student protest demands mostly ended in collaboration and compromise, following meetings between the president and student activists. President Fonteyn found that additional communication was needed to update students on progress, as the university had already committed to many of their requests but had not yet initiated work at that point in time.

College presidents operate within a system of constraints and opportunities. Members of the university community most often are not privy to the internal conversations and goings-on between campus leadership, governing bodies, and political entities. (Except in cases like Florida's "sunshine laws," which will be detailed in a later section). Nor does everyone

understand the political and historical contexts of the institution or the unique characteristics of the institution itself, including its students, academic programs, size, demography, geographic location, or governance. The savviness of the president determines how the campus operates and enacts change under these contexts and constraints, most of which are social, systemic, or political. Responses from college and university presidents illustrate the calculations and limitations to their role that are necessary for institutional success and their own continued tenure. The various constituencies served by the president may, at times, have competing demands and presidents must navigate the systems and constraints successfully in order to achieve their goals and guide the institution towards progress wherever possible. President Cunningham of Foliage University had served as president of numerous institutions over his long career and acknowledged the challenges of working within the system of higher education. He admitted that, "I think you're always constrained in the public university by a policy, by the politics of the place, by the constraints of constituencies out there that have particular views." The following sections will explore these various contexts and constraints experienced by presidents.

External Contexts

Student collective action occurs in the face of these oppositional structures, in the case of student movements, students react to external structures and how they are enacted in a college campus setting. Students cannot escape external events and contexts when it comes to their own lives and decisions. College presidents cannot escape these realities, either. In fact, presidents reported taking external social and political contexts into account quite often in determining how to respond to student movements on camps. Prior research has also shown that campus activism reflects general social trends, which have been shown to vacillate between right or left political

ideologies (Lipset, 1971).Therefore, the following section summarizes findings related to RQ3: *What external social contexts, such as political climate, town-gown relations, or current events, inform presidential decision-making regarding student movements?*

External Political Contexts

External political forces were reported by presidents across all institution types as influencing how they evaluated student protest issues, tactics, publicity, and demands. The following external political entities influenced president decisions: 1) for state public schools, political figures at the local and state levels, particularly state legislatures and governors; 2) for HBCUs, state and federal political figures; 3) for all institution types, state and federal policies; 4) for private religious institutions, leaders in the affiliated religious sect; and 5) for all institutions, political contexts of the surrounding community in which the college campus is geographically located. The following section discusses the common considerations of college presidents when responding to student activists while taking external political contexts into account.

Public state institutions. Aside from general considerations of federal free speech laws, presidents of public state schools were most concerned with the political contexts of their state rather than national contexts. In particular, certain elected local or state officials (where a person was mentioned by name) or roles (such as “the governor” or “the legislature”) were cited as a primary consideration for public school presidents in responding to student demands.

Presidents of state schools, particularly in states with Republican governors or Republican-controlled legislatures, reported considering the external political context of student protests and subsequent policy or funding changes more than private universities. This was most likely because the protest demands made by students in recent years have related to issues of

equity, diversity and inclusion, which are often highly criticized by the Republican party. Student movements organized around issues of racial bias incidents, Black Lives Matter, providing in-state tuition for DACA students, or updating LGBTQ policies were the most widely by presidents in the sample. Further, presidents who faced these student issues at public state institutions said they sometimes felt constrained in their responses due to Republican state politics or anticipated political consequences.

For example, President Shawn shared that when he served as president of Rivers University, he often felt constrained by the governor's politics, which were used to direct school policies and influence the Board of Trustees. President Shawn said that early in his tenure, he was called upon by the students to address discrimination in the university's policies, particularly related to sexual orientation. He said it became challenging because the governor, "was a Republican in a Republican state and he didn't want the sexual orientation thing to become an issue and to go through. So, he called my board members and asked them to oppose it." President Shawn acknowledged that he was frustrated by this political posturing, particularly because he knew that his campus community agreed with his plan to update university policies with regard to sexual orientation. Shawn told me that, "publicly, [the governor] went out and he condemned me for doing the move, because it passed…so all that happened, and you don't like to have the governor chewing on you and calling your board members." Shawn also shared with me that the political constraints may at times be a type of theatre and that this is something that presidents had to recognize and not back down from, even though the politics must be publicly addressed. Following the conflict, Shawn said that:

> At the end of that week I get a call and it's from him…he said, you did what you needed to, no big deal but I had to oppose you on that. I felt like saying no, you didn't. You could have opposed me and not get out there and beat me up in public, you didn't have to. But

> anyway, it did give me a real insight into how politicians work which is, they play to their base.

Shawn advised that, "the university president needs to know that—in the short run this probably cost me a little bit. But in the long run it didn't because it was the right thing to do." In this case, President Shawn felt pressure from the governor's public opposition to updating LGBTQ policies on campus but sided with the students and continued to implement the changes. While no official state policies were constraining Shawn's decision, specific elected state officials were influencing his response and how he needed to frame it in order to publicly retain his standing in the community, which tended to also lean conservative.

In cases like this, the president must weigh the potential tradeoffs of adopting student demands or resisting them. One president attempted to manage the relationship and tradeoff by tailoring her messaging to political stakeholders so as to decrease the chance of them meddling in the resolution to meet or compromise on student demands. President Fonteyn described how she planned out her communication with external political stakeholders so as to minimize their interference in university operations, particularly when discussing student movements. She emphasized certain aspects of student demands while downplaying others, in hopes that she could retain autonomy in making her decision to adopt what she and her students had agreed was best for the university community. Like President Shawn, President Fonteyn said she has a Republican legislature to navigate. In her example, Fonteyn said that while the legislature is "very much in favor of 'free speech', they were not necessarily in favor of some of the things that the students wanted. So, when I talked to the legislature, I wanted to emphasize student free speech and not so much the demands." Fonteyn said she often had to do this when working with a conservative legislature that often chose to politicize student movement issues. She advised that, "you do have to tailor your remarks to your audience a little bit. It doesn't mean you're

going to change your values or what you're going to do, but you do change the emphasis." Other presidents in similar state government contexts reported that they employed comparable tactics of targeted messaging for external political entities.

However, there were some instances where state university presidents felt that their hands were tied, and they could not speak out publicly on certain issues due to the constraining nature of the state government. President Tallchief of Desert Rock University went so far as to tell me she didn't even want to speak further about divergences in opinion with the legislature or governor because "that's maybe the very thing that gets me the call." My archival research and full conversation with this president indicated that Tallchief was not exaggerating, and that the level of interference by the legislature has led this university to engage in delaying tactics with students in order to avoid meddling from the legislature while it was in session. President Shawn stated such a dilemma a bit more directly and said that, "if you're going to be a president of a public university, you need to recognize that for that period of time that you're in the office, you really don't have free speech. You can't say in public what you really think about a lot of stuff." He specifically referred to the audience that President Tallchief struggled with and cited, "your biggest donor is the state legislature and you have to suffer some real idiots in those positions sometimes." Whether idiots or cunning adversaries, the state legislatures, especially those with majority conservative lawmakers, proved to be a point of contention for several presidents.

Schools that were not only public institutions, but also part of a state system had similar constraints due to policies and policymakers. In these cases, being part of a state system introduced another layer of constraints in terms of decision-making and communication. Said President Nureyev, "we were unfortunately in the state university system and that meant that, in effect, I could not oppose any legislation from the state because presidents in state colleges are

not supposed to be commenting on legislative issues." President Fosse of Celsius State College said that he had to ensure that any big changes he wanted to make in response to student demands aligned with the several other colleges in the state system. While President Fosse said that this was not a challenge too often, there were still a few sticking points every so often that required additional meetings to gain consensus.

Boomerang University was also part of a statewide comprehensive system. President Hawkins recognized that, sometimes, presidents "have disagreements with the system chancellor and you need to work those out…I've been in a system position as well on a campus and I know some of the constraints you have when you're working at the system level." He said that this perspective made it easier for him as a president within a system and that he "enjoyed working in systems." He mitigated the constrains that could arise in a state system since he has "always tried to work hard to have a good relationship with people at the system level so that when issues come up, they know who they're talking to on the phone and we can reach a good positive resolution."

Tumbleweed State College was also part of a state system, but President Copeland said that it had not posed any challenges in her short tenure. She described that coordination across the system was important, especially in creating consistency in how the system responded to concealed carry on campus. She said that, "was the law in the state and it's a law that I'm part of an eleven-member campus system, eight state agencies. So, decisions are made that are going to be implemented throughout the system." She said there was no question as to whether the institutions in the system had "statewide laws that we have to implement and uphold." Dr. Astaire served as the Chancellor of the Plains State System and said that he encountered external political constraints that were similar to other public institution and state system presidents. In

the example he shared with me, Dr. Astaire had tried to create a streamlined statewide system for transfer credits that both he and student activists agreed would be best for students transferring within the state. Unfortunately, the governor disagreed and fought Dr. Astaire on the changes. Dr. Astaire said that this was one of the "occasions where we would get into closed door conversations with the governor who was in his own battle with the legislature—and they were all in the same party by the way—around priorities and things of that sort." Dr. Astaire also said that things changed during his time from being apolitical and:

> All about the student experience to it all became about the governor's agenda. And in those cases, there were individuals who were put there specifically to enact an agenda that was not about students at all. And you can fight those to a point till the governor has a majority of people on the board and then the governor's agenda is going to win.

As demonstrated by this data, public institution presidents felt that they had the greatest amount of external political maneuvering to do before responding to students and potentially getting their demands approved. This was especially true if changes required broader political approval or if the level of publicity had reached a point that the state governor or legislature felt that they had to issue a public statement or influence the outcome.

Private institutions. Presidents of private schools expressed that they were mostly unconcerned with state politics, and instead were involved with national political contexts or internal politics, such as governance issues with boards or religious leaders affiliated with the institution. However, President Robinson reported the greatest consideration of external political contexts and expressed his consideration of not only the state political contexts but also those of Senators and Representatives in all fifty states, since HBCU funding is tied to federal funding policies. He also had to take into account any individual state political drama that may be reflected in the HBCU's own contexts. Further, President Robinson was required to anticipate how a state politician may publicly respond to the HBCU's funding in light of his own state's

political contexts. President Robinson shared his unique circumstances, and said that, "I've got federal appropriations and exist in the federal budget that's approved every year which means that I have four-hundred and thirty-five stake holders in Congress and Senators that I have to, in some way shape or form, respond to." He said his role was more complicated because:

> I have all the constraints of a private institution that exist, and the public issues because we've got federal appropriations. Rather than just have a state legislator, governor to deal with, I have to deal with the President of the United States. I have to deal with all of the Senators and all other Congress folks.

President Robinson said that in the instances of student activism on his campus, he had to consider how state officials at other institutions could interpret his circumstances through their own contexts, which made all of his leadership choices "extremely complicated." I asked if this was only a rare occurrence, and Robinson said it was actually common and "there are very few issues in which it does not have some implication."

Although presidents of private institutions reported less involvement with local and state political officials when compared to state public presidents, they were still operating in communities and geographic locations that affected the political views of local hires and students. President Horton led Clive College, a formerly religiously affiliated institution, and reported political constraints due to the conservative area in which the campus was located. This was especially relevant when students organized around equity issues for LGBTQ students and options for gender-inclusive housing. Due to the overlap between religious conservatives in the geographic area and the members of the Board of Trustees, President Horton said he felt like "you never have that much freedom." In this same instance, he expressed frustration that "trustees tend to be more conservative than faculty or staff and to some extent that's true of alumni and donors as well." Other presidents of private religious institution did not mention any political constraints in terms of local, state, or national officials. Rather, they were beholden to

the mission of the institution and the norms and decisions of the university's affiliated religious governing body.

State and federal policies. Campus presidents said that prior to making decisions about their institutions, they considered state and federal laws regulating their campus policies. In addition, presidents of both private and public institutions reported that they navigated these laws and policies when determining how best to meet student movement requests. Sometimes when barriers arose, they could utilize a sort of "work around" of their policies, as many institutions concluded when updating policies to accommodate DACA students. President Fonteyn of Southern State University worked within her institution since "we could not declare the DACA students to be in-state residents, the state legislature would not permit that." Rather than accepting the limitations imposed by the state legislature for DACA students, Fonteyn and her administration decided that they could instead "meet full financial aid of every student, in-state or out of state…we just couldn't call them in-state students." In cases of significant disagreement with federal policies, college leaders have the option to band together in legal action to oppose new policies. College presidents also have united in defense of existing university policies, in the example of ongoing lawsuits aimed at weakening affirmative action.

Unique state policies also affected presidential behavior and communication. For example, Florida's "sunshine laws" make public all conversations between any two or more people discussing matters related to the institution (McLendon & Hearn, 2006). Skyline College was based in Florida, and President Taylor found sunshine laws difficult to navigate, especially when he was new to his position and said, "the first time you run into it you go, huh? That's the way it is…and you go, ok, got it." It made it complicated for Taylor to meet with stakeholders and quickly resolve problems or brainstorm solutions because, "if you have a board of trustees

meeting, you cannot have an executive session. Any time two trustees are in the same room, you have to call a meeting." He said that if he holds a meeting, then he has to "call and have a public notice of a meeting. It's really to an extreme, extreme." This type of policy would sometimes affect how he went about responding to students because President Taylor had to consider how not only his response but his decision-making process (if it involved others, which it likely did) would appear publicly. He told me that, "you feel like there's cameras on you all the time—there's not—but it's that kind of publicness." In addition to ultra-transparency, President Taylor said that it sometimes slowed down his responses and processes simply because his office also had to respond quickly to any information requests, which took time away from addressing student concerns or other campus needs.

Public colleges and universities are subject to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests that make communications regarding university business subject to public inquiry. While not as extreme as Florida's sunshine laws, FOIA still caused presidents to be measured in their university communications. In this way, some of them commented that meeting in person was a more efficient way to communicate and solve problems since they could present all ideas for evaluation without concern for FOIA requests. President Robbins shared his communications within the context of FOIA and said that, "all of my correspondence, meetings, they're all public and on the record, so, maybe you do have to be a little bit more cautious, knowing that, every email that you send can and often will be in the news." He said this affected his communications and what he put into writing, and he had to be "very cautious in the way that you word things…You don't hide anything, for sure, but you have to realize that what you say will be in the public square and can be taken out of context." Cautions around FOIA have become more prevalent with the ability to quickly distribution misinformation via social media outlets. The

potential for small sections of correspondence to be taken out of context was a concern of several public university presidents in the study.

Student safety as it related to guns on campus came up several times in interviews with public institution presidents. Presidents serving in western and southern states expressed the greatest concerns over maintaining campus safety while also upholding state concealed carry laws. President Copeland of Tumbleweed State College said this issue was challenging but that, "it is our job as an institution to uphold those laws and policies, so we try to be clear on where the line is, what needs to be done and what doesn't and still practicing good judgement and that's hard." President Fonteyn remarked that she struggled to keep students safe on campus during a confrontation where non-students brought weapons on campus, stating that, "we were very limited in what we could prevent in the way of arms. That's a very bad loophole and it affects the private [institutions] almost not at all." As the data on types of student movements demonstrated in Chapter Four, students are concerned about their safety on campus, especially when guns are present either in the hands of students with permits or campus safety officers. Given the legal constraints based upon their states, presidents like Copeland and Fonteyn must find a way to ensure student safety while still upholding state laws, which can be extremely difficult.

Issues of campus speakers and free speech have been prevalent in national news the past few years, especially with the increase in far-right speakers and provocateurs invited to campuses by student groups. However, most presidents in the sample said that they have worked through a couple of these events and found several tactics to balance their commitment to free speech on campus while protecting students from potentially harmful speech. Presidents in the sample said that they have reframed such events and free speech issues not as a constraint but instead as an educational opportunity for students. President Robbins of Rookie University said that he

thought that free speech issues were "pretty cut and dried for a public [university] and so in some ways that might give you a little bit of an advantage to fall back upon." In this way, Robbins found that the law essentially made his decision for him and confirmed that he didn't see free speech as a constraint. He elaborated further on his perspective and said his view is "that this should be a place where all voices can be heard and that even abhorrent ideas…we challenge those ideas, not by shutting them out but by showing them to be bad ideas and putting forward good ideas." Robbins emphasized that conflicts over free speech or even hate speech should be resolved by "even just sitting down with students and saying, this is part of education too, it's part of learning how to be effective and making change." It is important to note that Rookie University is also located in a historically conservative state, where issues of free speech may also best be resolved through encouraging more speech as opposed to disruptive protests.

President Hines of United University highlighted the advantage that he had in addressing issues of free speech and controversial speakers on campus. He chose to take advantage of resources that his prestigious institution had to offer and fight ignorant or hateful speech with knowledge and expertise. He worked with administrators and faculty to organize discussion panels, town halls, and other events with relevant scholars to counter offensive speech. President Kelly of Cooperative University also took this approach and allowed speakers that were in conflict with the founding religious doctrine of the campus, citing free speech. Cooperative University was a private institution, so he had more flexibility in his choices around free speech on campus, yet Kelly felt compelled to allow opposing perspectives to be debated in public forums on campus. He accomplished this by informing the religious leadership and student leadership of his decision to allow the speaker and also proposed next steps. He said to religious leadership, "I know you're disappointed in me because we're protecting this speech, let me

explain why." He described a long tenure and supportive relationship with his board and religious leadership, so this approach worked. In addition to offering an explanation to internal stakeholders, President Kelly said, "on that kind of event I will do a separate letter to the community. I'll also do a town hall or in this case with Planned Parenthood we organized a panel of leading voices for pro-life and I introduced the event by explaining why we protect speech but also what our moral convictions are regarding this matter as a [religious] university." Kelly wanted to make clear that all speak was welcomed at Cooperative University, but that conversations and education were also important. He would always

> Try to get the balance right; I don't want anyone to feel their speech is limited or chilled and we're very consistent about it. If I were to compare ourselves to some other institutions I would just say, we do everything they may do in terms of protecting speech *and* we're very attentive to counter programming or additional alternative programming that recognizes that there's more than one position on a matter.

Again, President Kelly did not find free speech laws to be a constraint to his private institution but rather an opportunity to provide additional education outside of the classroom.

Historically, some leaders have used state, federal, or institutional policies to fall back on if their decision is disputed, or as a reason not to change something; in other words, an excuse to not take action. It is easy to see this unfold in cases where institutions gave up on pursuing financial aid options for DACA students after the government failed to pass various iterations of the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act. Institutions that prioritized inclusion of DACA students found a way to prioritize the needs of these students rather than accepting policies that did not allow for in-state tuition to DACA students. While sixteen states and the District of Columbia passed legislative action extended in-state tuition benefits to DACA students, seven state university systems also passed guidelines through their governing boards to offer DACA students in-state tuition or fully finance their tuition and fees

(National Conference of State Legislatures, 2019). I will propose in Chapter Six that presidents who behave like tempered radicals seek to pursue alternative or creative workarounds rather than accepting the status quo due to legal or policy constraints. President Duncan of Harvest College summarized her creative and flexible approach to seeking actionable resolutions, saying that, "there are always policy constraints or guides on everything you do but that doesn't mean you can't work to come up with a resolution." She emphasized collaborating to reach "maybe not the solution that they first want but some kind of resolution that brings to bear all of the policy issues, all of the resource issues, all of the people issues."

External Media and Social Contexts

External media, as defined by media outside of internal public relations communication or the student newspaper, also played a role in influencing presidential responses. Typically, presidents said that media coverage did not influence the eventual course of action, but that media coverage affected their timing of response and the scope of their audience. In cases where misinformation was reported by external news media, presidents said they felt compelled to make additional or immediate public statements to clarify their stance or situation. The more well-known student movement issues became, either through social media or national media attention, the more urgently they need to be addressed and a public response issued. In the example of the white privilege initiative at Clive College, President Horton witnessed the rapid escalation due to the Fox News report. President Horton said that he felt compelled to respond to a national audience in addition to communicating with students, staff and faculty. Due to the barrage of media coverage, Horton decided to hire an outside PR firm to assist in his response to protect any reputational threat to the campus and also the safety of its students. Media coverage quickly died down following the combined efforts of campus and the PR firm.

Regarding social media outreach and activism from students, most presidents reported that they engaged in proactive engagement with student issues through social media accounts, confirming recent findings on the importance of campus administrators monitoring student social media accounts to stay abreast of student issues (Griffin et al., 2019). Presidents shared that they often monitored what was being said on the college's social media accounts as well as their presidential accounts. President Smuin of East Sunrise University said that he interacted regularly with students via social media, even engaging with them on a good-natured joke account about him. He also encouraged student affairs staff to monitor student group accounts in order to stay ahead of issues that could quickly escalate via social media.

Despite their best efforts, concerns would occasionally go unaddressed and student activists would take to social media to lobby a response from campus leadership. In these cases, presidents said that they felt an urgency to respond, sometimes before they had all of the information that was needed to be thorough. President Nijinski illustrated this new challenge, and said that

> Social media also has made this an incredibly challenging environment because you really don't have the time to figure out what's going on, you have to make a decision and move with it. Sometimes you do things that you might not have done in retrospect but you just gotta move, you gotta make decisions, and people don't have the patience for the kind of reflection that you would ordinarily want.

As mentioned in Chapter Four, the additional pressure to respond from social media activity presented a new challenge for college presidents in responding to student activists. Other presidents reported that instead of rushing a response that they may regret they would delay by acknowledging the students and providing a timeline for a thorough response. In fact, President Cole of College of the Saints shared an example of when he responded quickly to the campus in a public statement but then discovered (after backlash from students) that he cited incorrect

information. He retracted his earlier statement in a campus-wide apology one week later. In a couple of cases, the urgency of demands from students on social media were unrealistic. As mentioned, President Fonteyn was frustrated when demands were made in the middle of the night following a late-night incident, followed by outcries when the demands had not yet been addressed by the morning. In contrast, President Nijinski said he went down to the dorms late at night and met with students to discuss their concerns following a racial bias incident in the dorms. Nijinski worked at a smaller liberal arts institution compared to President Fonteyn, who worked at a large state school, demonstrating how expectations and responses can vary by institutional contexts.

External "Meddling" on Campus

A number of both public and private presidents expressed frustration and, at times, anger at outside entities that targeted students in order to promote their agendas on campus. Presidents felt that in many of these cases students were being taken advantage of due to their roles and naiveté on some of the issues. Several presidents reported that their students were targeted by outside conservative groups with the purpose of disrupting campus policies aimed at addressing inequities on campus, as also described in prior research by Binder & Wood (2013). Research conducted by Barnhardt (2020), concluded that recruitment of students by external groups was more likely to be successful when a campus had a history of student organizing (as measured by civil rights-era activism), there is a close connection to pre-existing aligned groups to the organization (in this example, faculty or graduate student labor unions and anti-sweatshop activism), is a large institution, or is considered prestigious based upon academic selectivity. These findings suggest that presidents that faced continual targeting by outside conservative

groups perhaps have pre-existing aligned groups on their campuses to such causes, which may be particularly relevant in geographically conservative areas.

Some campuses were disrupted by external unaffiliated individuals such as campus preachers, who would harass students on campus. Students organized in response to these types of disruptive people, uniting to demonstrate the values and environment they believe their campuses exemplify. In other instances, external protestors would invade a campus in a protest or demonstration which was unrelated to student issues. This occurred in the case of the "Unite the Right" rally held on the University of Virginia campus prior to the start of classes in the fall of 2017, which threatened student safety. Again, students at the University of Virginia organized in defiance of the threat to their values and peaceful campus environment, which risked their safety and the safety of campus structures. Regarding such external threats, president respondents asserted that student safety was of the utmost importance to them and their staff as well as a key consideration in responding to students. Even so, public institutions struggled with preventing demonstrations or sanctioning external protestors due to existing free speech policies. Several presidents recommended that in light of these national events, institutions should take care to tighten up manner, time, and place policies to ensure student safety.

President Limón of Miscellaneous College said his students complained that they felt threatened by a problematic and aggressive preacher on campus. In response, President Limón encouraged students to combat speech with speech, which they did. President Limón said that the preacher had been on campus every day for at least a couple of weeks and that, "in a public space it's hard for students to completely avoid him. Some of them have come to us and said, you've got to get rid of this, we shouldn't have to live with this on our campus." In this case, President Limón had to "remind them that it's a public institution and people have the right of free

speech." He and his staff recommended to the students that they work to resolve it themselves and that,

> You fight speech with more speech. They circled this guy and they started singing hymns and songs basically about love and forgiveness. Just sort of this impromptu, they sort of drowned out the negative messages with positive messages. I just thought that was an interesting example and I think the speaker was really flustered because they were quite surprised that the students chose to just start singing and engage in a different form of their own protest.

Rather than organizing a panel to counter the speech, the students of Miscellaneous College organized their own counter to offensive speech. President Limón recognized this as a frustrating situation, but one that had to be dealt with creatively since it was his responsibility to uphold federal law. He cited that, "at a public institution you have to know that this comes with the territory, that you have public spaces on campus that are open not just to students but to other people from the community as well." In such cases, it is not even that a speaker was invited to campus, but rather that community members or others are on campus causing disruptions.

A few presidents recognized that some lists of student demands were directly taken from national organizations pushing for change on college campuses. In instances where students did not author their own demands nor acknowledge their origin, presidents were less likely to earnestly engage with students, since the demands were often not applicable or appropriate for their campus. President Limón said that at Miscellaneous College, "when we see a set of demands that was lifted straight from the internet or national group, we say, look, that's interesting, but have you thought about this yourselves? Have you looked into what's happening here locally and at the university?" He would attempt to first have students acknowledge their source and would then turn the oversight into a teaching moment. He asked the student group to take a look at all of the national demands, do the work to personalize them for the campus, then schedule another meeting with him to discuss where they could work together on a resolution.

Another recent trend was targeting of campuses by external groups, such as the white nationalist group Identity Europa, which posted racist flyers on campuses across the nation (Jaschik, 2017). Essentially, individuals or groups from off campus would attempt to instigate conflict or make groups of students feel unsafe as part of their group's prerogative. Many presidents said that these types of incidents greatly increased during and following the 2016 presidential election. These anecdotes are confirmed by the Anti-Defamation League's Center on Extremism tracking and analysis found over 300 verified incidents of white nationalist propaganda at campuses in 2018 (Bauer-Wolf, 2019). President Horton shared his experience with similar groups, saying that,

> There were apparently a couple of these people, some of them off-campus, almost like goading us, they come on campus, write something, and run off. It's a little like pulling the fire alarm or calling in a bomb threat, something like that. You realize you do just have these sick people who are trying to get you. I mean that's not to say that we didn't have some problems within campus but the issue with that is you call a public forum.

Although these external groups do not originate on campus, the effects of their disruptions and even threats remained on campus once they were gone.

Institutional Contexts

Higher education institutions are varied and unique in many ways, including size, students, location, history, academic programs, prestige, mission, and campus climate. Each campus is part of the U.S. system of higher education but also autonomous in its operation, which is why institutional characteristics and contexts cannot be divorced from presidential responses in this study. Institutional context affects which issues students organize for and how they gain the attention of college leadership. Institutional context also affects how their activism is received by the campus community, including the president. Prior research has shown that institutional characteristics such as size, prestige, history of activism and private vs. public have

been related to the level of student engagement in activism on a college campus. With this in mind, I sought to discover which institutional factors contributed to how a president responds to student activism. Specifically, RQ4 asks: *What institutional contexts inform presidential decision-making regarding student movements?*

Interview data revealed two themes in this area. First, institutional constraints as represented by the university's mission, policies, and governing boards would occasionally hinder reaching resolution with students. In these cases, presidents based their decisions on what was acceptable in terms of university policies and any governing boards or affiliated religious leaders. Second, presidents shared that institutional contexts were key to determining how to respond to student activists and how to communicate the response. Presidents who had served at multiple institutions contrasted their experiences, which illustrated how the institutional context greatly influenced their decision-making. For example, presidents at smaller institutions reported meeting with students in an impromptu and in a very personal and informal setting, like a fireside in the student dorm rooms. In contrast, presidents of large institutions would arrange for a meeting in their office and would take time to organize large campus meetings with students or other stakeholders. The different handling of student movements by presidents was largely based upon institutional contexts—the response cannot be divorced from the context of the institution—because everything was contextual in the mind of these presidents.

Data analysis shows that the institutional contexts relevant to presidential decision-making regarding student movements are: 1) institutional types (public vs. private; religious); 2) governance structure and relationships; 3) size; 4) student demographics; 5) and academic factors such as programs and institutional prestige. The following section will illustrate how presidents take these contextual factors into consideration in their responses and plans of action.

Institutional Type

Trends in responses based upon institutional type are outlined in this section. Since prior research has revealed student movement trends in differing institutional contexts such as: public versus private, size, demographics, geographic location, prestige, academic programs, and an institutional history of student activism, I have included these contexts in my analysis. Finally, presidents expressed differences in decision-making towards student movements based upon governance and their Board of Trustees.

Public versus private. One of the greatest differences in terms of perceived constraints was whether the institution was public or private. As mentioned in the previous section, public university presidents felt that they were more constrained by state policies compared to private institutions. However, presidents of private schools were more likely to express that they felt constrained by their Board of Trustees, religious groups affiliated with the institution, or even by campus faculty. President Nijinski said that he had served in leadership roles at both public and private institutions and that, "the public [school]'s tougher but I think the line between public and private is depending on where the publics are and who the boards are and who the governor is. You can definitely see that some places, it's going to be very, very challenging." He added that, "privates aren't always easy either, but I think there's probably a little more flexibility. I've certainly felt constrained." President Cunningham of Foliage University agreed that public institutions were more challenging in terms of constraints, saying, "I think you're always constrained in the public university by a policy, by the politics of the place, by the constraints of constituencies out there that have particular views about whatever." Cunningham had served at several public universities of different sizes and within different political contexts over the years, so he was well practiced with public institutional constraints.

Some public and private presidents said that they actually did not feel constrained by people or policies when it came time to respond to student movements. These presidents said that they had the tools and flexibility needed to make their own decisions without limitations. President Hawkins shared that,

> I've spent most of my career at public universities, just very early on in my career a little bit in private but, otherwise I've spent most of mine in public. For dealing with these kinds of issues I haven't really felt that there were undue constraints…students may be asking me to do things that are against board policy, but I think most of those policies a private university would have just as well as a public.

One former public president, President Tharp of Petite University, felt similar and said, "I haven't felt constrained." She thought that the "greatest thing is to have clarity of purpose, to have values, to try to be as pro-active as possible so when something does happen, if you've done the planning and preparedness then you're executing the plan."

Finally, a few presidents in answering this question initially responded that they weren't constrained, then go on to tell me about how they couldn't do certain things because of the Board, legislature, or community. I'm not sure why these limitations were not originally framed in their minds as constraints, since they most certainly are. Perhaps in their eyes, the constraints had become an internalized context to the point that presidents were no longer aware they were acting within constraints. This may explain why some students reach a point of frustration with administrators and presidents who may be unable to think outside the box about possible solutions.

Private religious institutions. Presidents of religious institutions, particularly those that were rural and small in size, reported having fewer instances of student movements on campus compared to larger religious institutions in urban areas. This partly had to do with student profiles of the institutions in the sample, as students attending religious institutions in urban

areas were more likely to embrace servant leadership models and social justice causes, therefore advocating for those causes on campus. This also had to do with the geographic location and diversity of the student body. For example, President Weidman University of Beachtown said that**,**

> If there was a demonstration, typically there weren't that many people in it. It typically wasn't to get something like dining hall or something as insignificant as that changed on the campus. It would be more of a policy matter and things of that nature. We had very few of them. It's not like a public state university, it's not the same at all, it's private, it's Catholic.

In contrast to President Weidman's observation, there were other Catholic universities in the sample that experienced a number of student movements during a similar time period, such as College of the Saints or Cooperative University, both of which were in larger urban areas compared to University of Beachtown.

As illustrated in some of the detailed examples of student movements in Chapter Four, the most commonly cited example of student activism on religious campuses was related to proposed policy changes to make them more inclusive of LGBTQ students. All of the religious institution presidents, except for President Weidman, cited an example of large student movements advocating for changes to policies to be more inclusive of LGBTQ students. And among these examples, the presidents met with the student activists, collaborated or worked with them on their proposed changes and coordinated with the administration and church leadership to come to a resolution that appeared to satisfy all parties. Consistent with these examples, presidents of private religious institutions also reported that students had access to them directly to discuss concerns. They thought that this relationship to students led to the prevention of most movements from blowing up into something bigger, with escalated emotions on both sides.

Presidents of these institutions also reported having additional support through a campus liaison that was either a chaplain or ombudsman that helped to mediate a resolution.

Governance

Several presidents cited navigating their institution's approach to governance or shared governance as playing a role in their decision-making process. In their review of governance literature, Kezar and Eckel (2004) stated that scholars did not provide a precise definition of governance. Rather, that "at the broadest level, most theories assume that governance refers to the process of policy making and macro-level decision making within higher education" (p. 375). Further, "shared governance" has become a somewhat loose term in higher education and has come to represent the idea of giving groups of often-elected campus stakeholders (students, faculty, administration) a share in making decisions and also the assignment of certain decision-making responsibilities to a specific group or role (Olson, 2009). Using these broad definitions of governance and shared governance, presidents reflected on who was involved in their decision-making process regarding student movement responses.

President Nureyev of New England State described the model of governance at his institution as "shared governance" through a college senate made up of elected representatives from across campus, including students, faculty, and staff. Because of this structure, he said, "there were mechanisms for students and for many ways for students to work with radical faculty on issues, including environment at the senate level. So, there were certain kinds of things that perhaps allowed us to reach mutual decisions rather than you know, for the pressure cooker top to pop off." As will be detailed further in Chapter Six, one of the preventative tactics used by presidents to head off student movements was building relationships with students through

student government. This, in addition to encouraging student activism in partnership with faculty, was how President Nureyev employed this preventative tactic.

At Kind College, President Acosta was very much in line with the board of trustees regarding student demands for transgender bathrooms—both he and the board agreed that ensuring access to transgender bathrooms was the right choice. President Acosta said that he thought alignment occurred in this instance because, "it was a board with a lot of long-term trustees who cared deeply about the legacy of the institution and the mission of the institution. So they were, I think, eager to make the institution a really good place for students and make the institution a place that actually lived its mission." In general, President Acosta described a positive working relationship with his board, although he had a short tenure as president prior to Kind College's merger with a larger institution.

Presidents who held longer tenures at the same institution—indicating a level of success in that environment—reported a strong level of communication with their Board and other decision-making committees on campus. President Horton, Clive College, built upon his prior experience at another institution to shape a strong culture of collaboration, and, ultimately, increased state funding at his new institution. He was proud of this accomplishment, saying that, "we're really working to create a sense of one team…the board of governors and the chancellor and board of trustees really did not work well with the previous president…turning them around where they're supremely supportive of our institution." In this way, President Horton was able to build a strong relationship with the stakeholders governing Clive College's operations, which in turn, helped him to be supportive by these same people when he responded to student movements at Clive College.

Presidents of private, religious institutions had an additional layer of governance and influence: church leadership. When President Cole heard from students that eligibility for partner benefits at College of the Saints was one of the first LGBTQ-friendly policies that they wanted implemented, he called church leadership to plead his case and, ultimately, get permission to move forward. President King of Grey College stated the governance of his institution more bluntly and said "the church's perspective trumps the perspective of me, and trumps the perspective of our board of trustees and trumps the perspective of our individual faculty members." This left little latitude for President King's decisions in certain areas, the church had the final word on any matters, related to student activism or otherwise.

Size

As expected, institution size played a role in how presidents interacted with students, and, therefore, student activists. Institutions in the sample ranged in size from 1,200 to 27,000 total students. Small institutions in the sample were public, private liberal arts, or religious institutions and all of the small public institutions in the sample were rural. Large institutions were also a mix of public or private, with a couple of religious institutions; all but one of the large institutions was located in a city. East Sunrise University served fifteen thousand students total but was geographically classified as a distant town by IPEDS data (IPEDS, 2018). Presidents of small public and private institutions reported handling prevention and resolution of student movement issues in a much more hands-on, informal and personalized manner than compared to larger institutions. Larger institutions were more likely to employ a formal listening and data-gathering process followed by meeting a portion of student activist demands.

Small private institutions also were identified by presidents as attracting a type of student that was more interested in either the community aspect or the types of programs offered by that

smaller institution. This is especially consistent with smaller liberal arts institutions. On these campuses, presidents described students who were more residential, involved, and ultimately engaged on campus than students at larger institutions. A couple of presidents from small private institutions also described their students as more invested in the campus community, and therefore, more likely to advocate for what they thought was right for the university. Dr. Acosta of Kind College said that, "we were a small college, and everyone knew everyone, that was partly what drew them to Kind College, and it was also a college that had a long history of preparing people in the human service professions." President Acosta shared that he thought his students were engaged in activism because, "it was very much what I would refer to as a 'big feeling' kind of place, which meant that when students had an idea about something they mobilized quickly, they were able to do that quickly because it was so small…it was a very face-to-face place and so I would say I think both, it drew a student who was very compassionate and passionate about their ideas and also very eager to take action and make things right." The profile of a Kind College student was one who wanted to attend a small, liberal arts institution, and major in academic programs that are typically populated by civically-minded students. Acosta believed that this contributed to the level of activism at Kind College, which he and his administration encouraged and nurtured as part of their commitment to students and the community.

The small public and rural institutions were more likely to attract students that were local or had hometowns geographically close to the institution. President Duncan described the students of Harvest College as "about eighty percent or even a little more of our students are Pell eligible or first-generation college students…so that is a huge part of the population that we serve, mostly rural. Seventy five percent from [the state] and over, I think like sixty three percent

are women. It's a homogenous population as you can imagine in rural [state] there's just not a lot of diversity." Harvest College and other rural institutions located in the northwest, such as Astonishing University and Rookie University, were high in Pell eligible students and less diverse than similarly sized universities in the northeast. Depending on the campus, some students in these rural areas on both coasts also worked part time and were less likely than liberal arts counterparts to live in student residences.

In general, presidents of smaller institutions were well plugged in to student life on campus, either interacting with student leaders, being physically present on campus with students, or teaching classes on campus. This accessibility made it all the more probable that students felt comfortable directly approaching the president with issues. Reciprocally, presidents held high expectations for students in terms of communication, respect for the community, and responsibility for the campus. For example, in regard to an offensive headline in the student newspaper surrounding the tragic death by suicide of a student, President Weidman imposed sanctions on the student newspaper at University of Beachtown, and cited that, "we are a small intimate community and we need to respect each other." For President Nureyev, the smaller size of the institution meant that "you could do retail as opposed to wholesale leadership. Though messaging remained very, very important in terms of communicating beyond the campus as well." By "retail leadership," Nureyev meant that he could work much more personally and closely with students and student groups instead of relying on campus-wide messaging.

Presidents of large institutions did not cite their size as an advantage or a barrier, but rather approached their communications with greater delegation to student affairs leadership. These presidents had designated professionals in positions directly responsible for serving students. While some student activists may have eventually reached the president, presidents of

large institutions still would encourage students work with vice presidents moving forward on their issues. Additionally, presidents at large institutions experienced more student meetings where greater emotions and frustrations from students surfaced. They said this may have happened since these students may feel that they had less access to the president than students at smaller institutions.

Demographics

Student demographics indicate trends in student movement activity, issues on campus, and the types of students engaged in campus activism. The institutions in the sample hovered around 15-30 percent students of color and about 70-85 percent white students. I did not include this data in the institutional data in order to maintain confidentiality, as it would become evident which intuitions were an HBCU or MSI. Most of the institutions in the sample served around 30 percent of students utilizing Pell funding at their institutions. Urban institutions with the Carnegie classification of "City: Large" served a larger percentage of Pell students than compared to "Town: Distant." This study did not seek to determine student activism trends by demographic, although it is a helpful illustration of the type of institution where the presidents served their tenures and how presidents may have tailored their responses based upon student demographics.

Geographic Location

Institutions in the sample were located in five general regions in the United States: Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, Northwest, and Southwest. Each geographic region has its own physical, social, and political contexts that affect the public institutions, and to some extent, private institutions of the state in which they are located. Harvest College, for example, was located in a rural mountain town where a number of students engage in academic and

extracurricular work around environmental or agricultural issues. In contrast, at College of the Saints, an urban midwestern institution, students are more concerned with issues of economic inequality and the public good. As expected, there were some contextual trends based upon the geographic location, particularly area of the United States and the rural or urban setting in which the institution was located. One unique aspect of a few institutions was their proximity to Washington, D.C. These institutions all reported a history of student activism as well as a highly engaged and civically minded student population. This didn't mean that these institutions had come close to solving their racial-bias or other social justice issues, but rather that there was a passionate student advocacy effort organized around these issues and generally, a supportive administration. Presidents at these institutions also took great pride in their students' activism, citing it as part of the college experience that led to greater leadership development. Said President Robinson when asked to describe his students, "I would say extremely ambitious. Very bright, very conscientious. Most of the students are involved in service and they embody the service aspect of what we do."

Rural institutions, or those classified by IPEDS as "Town: Distant" were less likely to have vibrant student activism on campus. These institutions had students that were often working, or as President Duncan of Harvest College described, "there's not a lot of hanging out all the time. They're working or leaving because they don't have class. Some of our students, especially in sciences, are in class and then they'll be out in the field somewhere so our whole method is meant to facilitate experiential learning. A lot of what happens is not just in the classroom, it's out in the community or on the rivers or in the fields and the mountains." With these students, the president said they were too busy with academic pursuits in the field to be engaged in much activism outside of environment issues.

Rural institutions also had presidents who shared that they were often out and about on campus, where students recognized and called them by name. These presidents shared that they were a fixture of student life and believed that they were able to head off larger disruptions because of their relationships with students. This is similar to the finding—and there is some overlap—to the behavior of campus presidents at smaller institutions in the study. This approach as a preventative tactic used by presidents will be explored further in the next chapter.

Academics

Previous research has demonstrated a link between greater student activism on campus at liberal arts programs compared to research institutions (Trent & Craise, 1967; Heist, 1965; Somers, 1965; Watts & Whittaker, 1966). Academic programs and university mission also attract specific types of students interested in those programs. For example, College of the Saints emphasized academic programs for workforce preparedness and even recently reworked their entire academic catalog to increase the breadth and quality of these offerings. This workforce preparedness choice of programs is much different than the curriculum offered by a private liberal arts institution with its importance placed on civic engagement and liberal arts curriculum. As one can imagine, most students that worked while attending College of the Saints were less engaged on campus since many held part-time jobs, often related to their academic program, outside of school. President Cole told me that, "I've got a student body that's largely having to scramble and having to figure out how to pay for their education. In short, everybody had to work." He described these students as creating a very different dynamic on campus, since they would come to school, go to class, then attend to their other commitments. Cole said, "most of my students are putting their heads down, doing their schoolwork, and then they're out working, and—or they're living at home and they are kind of helping the family. They are helping with

childcare in the family with younger siblings, they're working, they're bringing in money for the family. You know, their lives are a challenge. And you really admire them." He said that because of this, while College of the Saints experienced a lot of activism in his time as president, "it's a very small section of the student population because most the student population just doesn't pay any attention to it because they're getting on with their other stuff. Now, small numbers of students can still have lots of public attention." Consistent with research on resource availability (McCarthy & Zald, 1987), students whose lives were engulfed by other responsibilities at College of the Saints, did not have the resource of time to commit to student movements.

While the most prestigious institutions in my study, as determined by selectivity, were mostly likely to have had a history of student activism, nearly all of the institutions had experienced recent student movements on campus. The couple of exceptions were small, rural, religious institutions and the two institutions where students were more likely engaged in off-campus, part-time work. Based upon the responses of presidents, prestige of the institution did not seem to play into their decision-making around student movements on campus. All responses indicated a certain level of pride about their respective institutions, their students, and their own leadership roles. Presidents were realistic about the types of students that their institutions served, but none tied their prestige to their own treatment of student activists. Perhaps, for presidents, this is because their own success is tied to the level of prestige of an institution.

Conclusion

External and institutional contexts are heavily considered by presidents when determining their response to student activists. External constraints such as political stakeholders, social climates, or policy issues may constrain a president from fully aligning his or her response to their own values. Each president shared how they navigated these various contexts, either

judiciously sharing information so as to protect the institution or students, or by prioritizing their goals so as not to expend too much political capital. As they consider constraints and contexts perhaps more than just what is "the right thing to do," presidents may act as tempered radicals, compelled to work within the system to effect change.

Institutional contexts also influence how a president responds to student movement demands. Presidents at small, liberal arts colleges were more likely to personally and proactively engage with students. Presidents at larger institutions with various academic programs often attempted to first delegate a response, then were occasionally compelled to personally respond when demands were escalated directly to them. As will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, presidents also employed preventative tactics to keep student movements from escalating on their campuses. The various institutional contexts affected which tactics were most effective on a given campus based upon size, demographics, and public or private classification. Across all institution types, presidents indicated that they valued student activism and believed that it benefitted their campuses. For students, tempered radical or cautious responses might be not be enough to resolve their issues, thus extending their movement further or moving from conventional to disruptive tactics. For presidents, the balance to keep their jobs, protect their students and campus community, and retain funding may take priority over ongoing student demands.

Chapter 6 Decision-making and Preventative Tactics

Birnbaum and colleagues (1989) concluded that a president's greatest contribution to the institution was as a symbol of the cultural and organizational leader. College presidents serve a symbolic role for their institutions, which they said compels presidents to personally respond to student movements rather than pass the response off to others. Presidents also said in interviews that they often see themselves as the final problem solver in most publicized decision on campus, among many others. That is, by the time an issue has reached an emotional maximum, the public response had to come from the president—not only because she was the cultural and organizational leader, but also because she could get the problem solved where other college leadership had, thus far, failed. In the literature review, I proposed that some presidents may be acting as tempered radicals (Meyerson & Scully, 1995) by working to institute policies and programs that met student demands while operating within the internal and external constraints of the institution. Interview data indicates that those who valued progress in areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion, over accomplishments such as fundraising or building new structures on campus were more likely to empathize with students and their issues than expressive cynicism or dismissiveness. Additionally, presidents who had previous ties to activism either through their experiences as a student, administrator, or faculty member, or who had close relationships with people engaged in activism, were more likely to express empathy towards student movements and cooperate or acquiesce to their demands.

Presidents in this study acknowledged their symbolic role and many embraced their responsibility to build or maintain campus culture. President Cunningham of Foliage University summarized his take on campus culture by saying, "I'm a strong believer that universities are made up of only two things, talent and culture…out of the two of them, culture is much more important. I think universities do very little to address their culture…so I spend a lot of time looking at that, figuring out how we can be a kinder, more friendly, more instructive, more engaged institution." Institutional culture, in turn, affected how students felt on campus and how they communicated concerns to those in leadership positions. A communicative culture may make students less likely to engage in a full-fledged movement because they were confident that their concerns will be addressed at a lower level. In contrast, students attending an institution without communication or transparency may become frustrated and feel like no one has listened to their concerns, thus rapidly escalating their message through public demonstrations.

To better understand how presidents framed their roles on campus—including creating and maintaining culture—the first section of the following chapter will address RQ5: *What personal narratives, values, or experiences guide presidential decisions to either support, ignore, or repress student movements?* Using responses to questions about values, personal narratives and experiences, attitudes toward students, and their philosophy of leadership, I offer some thoughts on whether presidents in this study might be considered tempered radicals. Next, personal experiences with activism, leadership, and higher education as well as personal and leadership narratives are illustrated to round out presidential profiles. In the second section of this chapter, I analyze interview data to understand RQ6: *How might presidents attempt to create a more inclusive campus environment through their responses to student protests?* This data includes

presidential beliefs about best practices for engagement of executive teams, prevention of escalated activism on campus, and the president's role in creating an inclusive campus.

Personal Experiences that Guide Decision-making

Outside of contextual influences, college presidents each had their own set of values, experiences, and goals that influenced their decisions. As concluded in Chapter Five, presidents are often encouraged to refrain from bringing "politics" into their decisions, especially at public institutions in states where there has been past disagreement over issues. However, in our current politicized environment, college presidents cannot be expected to stand idly by in instances where divisive political issues may harm students. When student movements organized around inevitably contentious issues, how the president approached their response to students depends upon the personality and history of the president and their institution. Using interview data from questions about beliefs, values, and personal history, this section connects presidential responses to their personal and professional experiences. Just as bias and positionality affect the lens of the researcher, they also affect the perception of student activists by presidents. Presidents could not divorce their ideas about student movements from their personal values and experiences.

As discussed in Chapter Four, presidents in this study were least likely to engage in ignoring or repressing student movements, counter to student movement literature from the 1960s and 1970s. Rather, they took a nuanced approach to first meet with students to discuss their demands, and generally support or co-opt their efforts, either by adopting student demands as campus priorities or by encouraging students to take on the bulk of the work themselves. In some cases, presidents sent students back to the drawing board to do further research, clarify their demands, or even meet with other executives on their team. Presidents drew from their own experiences to determine how they would respond to students in terms of communication and

also whether or not they were willing to adopt some, or all of the student movement demands. The following section explores how professional experiences, prior activism, and personal narratives or values appear to affect the approach to student activism by presidents.

Prior experiences

Presidents said that their prior experiences as students, faculty, or administrators influenced their approach to student activists on campus. This confirms findings like those of Griffin and colleagues (2019), who concluded that prior experiences with activism had shaped how Chief Diversity Officers responded to student activism (Griffin et al., 2019). Presidents said that this was because, first, their experiences professionally and personally shaped their perspectives on leadership, including what makes a good leader or a good college president. Second, presidents learned how best to interact with students and student activists through their prior experiences. Finally, presidents were shaped by their experiences and commented on how they had once themselves been active in student movements on campus.

Several presidents shared that they shaped their own leadership styles through a combination of hands-on experience and observation, particularly observing other college presidents. President Hawkins even said he had worked as chief of staff for "one president who was great, and one who was not" and learned about leadership and working with students through his observations and involvement. Others had experiences from outside of higher education that informed their perception of student activism and, in turn, the way they approached their interactions with students. Several presidents had successful careers in either politics, business, technology, healthcare or the military. Presidents with backgrounds outside of higher education drew parallels from their leadership experiences to explain how they might defuse a highly emotional situation with student activists. President Robbins had served as a

high-ranking member of the military and applied what he learned about relationships and leadership during his service to serving Rookie University students. In all interviews, presidents explained how their prior experience translated to higher education and serving students at their institutions. President Taylor described that he learned how to seek and implement student input from his time in academia and also in the business sector, saying, "I used to be a business school dean and then I also served on public company boards in fortune 500 companies and I think you learn about communication. Good governance is about being inclusive. You seek people's input, advice and then you make a decision." In Taylor's experience, students were key stakeholders whose feedback should be valued and addressed, not ignored or suppressed. He said that he strived to be "truly student centered" and make decisions based upon "what's in the best interest of the students." He compared this to what he would have done with stakeholders in his prior roles and said that it is paramount to be responsive through words and actions.

Presidents who had previously served in faculty roles felt that they were familiar with how students worked and how an issue could escalate into a full-fledged student movement. President Acosta, who had experience as a president and also presided over an entire state system, shared that his experience helped him recognize the importance of properly handling movements that had reached the president's office. He said that, "I think, at one level, it gives you a certain empathy and understanding that frustrations have to be pretty high in order to get to this point, which is part of the problem. Once the problem gets to the President's Office, it's a hell of a mess because it means that nobody was able to address it lower down the food chain. No easy problems ever get to the President's level." Dr. Astaire learned through these experiences that the best approach was to meet with students in these instances to learn about their demands and hopefully to de-escalate the movement if it had reached the point of a "mess."

He said he had learned a lot from these experiences and applied it to his interactions with students, faculty, and government officials in his position as state system director.

President Kelly, who held a long tenure at Cooperative University and also previously served in various administrative roles at the same university, described how he recognized the challenges facing students and generally would try to be empathetic. He said that, "I can imagine how they're thinking sometimes and where they don't have patience for us and our normal responses—sometimes I'm critical of our normal responses because I've been here long enough to know, that's just not good enough." He cited his rich experiences at Cooperative University as the reason that he had "an ability to kind of imagine and empathize a little bit more with where someone might be coming from." In another example of empathy, President Fonteyn shared that she understood why Southern State University students had directed their anger and demands toward her following a violent far-right event on campus, sharing that, "I also understood the students were angry and needed somebody to protest against. They couldn't very well protest against these people from the far right because they had already scattered back to the four corners of the earth they'd come from." Although she didn't relish in the negativity and anger from the students, Fonteyn said she was patient and communicative in response. She reiterated projects that were already under way to address racial bias incidents and listened and planned with students on how to bolster campus safety protocols.

Several presidents noted a positive difference in college leaders and their leadership approach in today's higher education environment. Presidents attempted to be inclusive leaders rather than authoritarian presidents who gave the final word on policies and campus decisions. Dr. Astaire observed that the style of presidential leadership in higher education had evolved from his time as student to president. He described peers and himself as people who were more

inclusive of student perspectives and more willing to integrate student feedback into campus priorities. President Robbins agreed that present day leaders were more open to feedback and recommended that they not staunchly defend their positions, stating that, "some administrators in higher ed fall into that trap of playing leader, and the strong leader who can't have their authority questioned and I think it does them a disservice because they build up resentment…If you go in and lead with 'well I'm the leader so I'm all knowing', you will fail in an instant." The prevailing leadership philosophies among presidents aligned with these perspectives, with them acknowledging that they regularly turned to their executive team and students for insights on campus.

When asked about any prior activism themselves, several presidents laughed or smiled, recalling their own time as student activists. While President Rogers of Raptor University did not provide a specific example of her student activism, she said she had a lifelong commitment to be a "social activist," which has been evident over the course of her undergraduate and graduate student experiences and her higher education career. Said President Tharp about her undergraduate experience, "I loved college, it spoke to me. The activism and the organizations and the advocacy and yeah. I was in protests…I was in a march and it was heated." Tharp then went on to describe an interaction she had had with the campus police while marching in a protest to expand student rights for international students. She said that her experience had given her insights into the inequities in higher education. In fact, she also served as a student regent for one year in college and experienced what she described as gender- and age-based discrimination in the role. She recalled:

> I was a regent I didn't get to vote. They treated me with sexism and ageism. I spent a whole year dealing with a bunch of white male elite bullshit. For a whole year. I showed up for every meeting, I was always prepared. If I could talk I would. I reported back to the students and the student government, I did my job. A couple of weeks before my last

> meeting as regent, I went and met with the president. I told them how I felt, and I told them what a mistake it was to have treated me this way. He goes well, what can I do? I said, well, you know, I've never made a report about students and student life to the Board of Regents. I've never talked about directly to this board. I would like to make a final report at my last meeting. He let me do that. I worked on that sucker, and it was a good report, it was the right report…I gave a darned good report that day about students. I talked about what students loved about the university. I talked to them about what they didn't love about the university and that the regents needed to keep those things in mind as they were doing their job. And I was twenty-two years old.

Tharp's other responses demonstrated how she was generally empathetic and supportive of student movement activists. She was especially supportive of initiatives that involved social progress on campus for historically marginalized student groups. She also encouraged Petite University students to gain leadership skills and build relationships with leaders so that they could continue to push their campus and, later, society for progress in these areas. In addition to her activism as a student, Tharp also had prior career experience in student affairs and as a chief diversity officer at other institutions. Though she focused on her student activism as a defining moment in her personal life, she also credited her administrative roles with her ability to navigate student activism issues and empathize with the frustration and pain of students who have been historically marginalized. Tharp said that she "got a chance to work on that from the very beginning of my career so that was good," and gave her an advantage in the human-facing aspect of social movement disruptions on campus.

Several other presidents identified with student activists through their own experiences either as activists themselves or tangentially through relationships or friendships with other activists. President Cole's wife was a student officer and activist on campus, and he supported those efforts while they were dating. He had admired her leadership as an undergraduate and spoke of appreciating those same qualities in the students at College of the Saints. Dr. Astaire acknowledged the changes in leadership that had happened over the years and said, almost

speaking on behalf of his generation, "I think that those of us who were more actively engaged in the 60s, no matter where you were, sort of bring that and understand that it's a bit disingenuous for us to have done it back in the day and then not be understanding when it happens now…it's not so, my way or the highway as it used to be." Those who were disengaged from activism as students or earlier in their careers did not appear to lack the ability to understand and work with students, although they were missing the personal connection to student activists that was expressed by presidents who were former activists. Presidents who were not activists as students or young faculty or administrators relied more heavily on their experiences observing other leaders and working with students to help them understand the student perspective. There didn't appear to be a difference in their style of resolution compared to presidents who had been activists as students.

Values and Leadership Philosophy

In addition to prior experiences, presidents shared how their personal narratives and values influenced their perspective on student movements. Personal narratives meaning the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves—that is, who do presidents think they are and how would they go about describing themselves to others? Along these lines, some presidents described themselves as collaborative and reasonable leaders, others said they were no-nonsense and direct. Many described their skill and techniques for building trust with students, faculty, administrators, and their executive team. Another subset shared the responsibility that they felt for developing future leaders either through mentoring their colleagues or supporting student activism and leadership on campus. Finally, presidents in the sample described what they valued in terms of personal priorities, professional accomplishments, or the type of campus environment that was important to them.

Presidents who had a long tenure or were retired often used personal narratives to suggest how others in higher education could develop their leadership skills. President Tharp recommended that responses to students were most effective when leaders had a deep understanding of themselves. She said that executives and leaders, "need to spend a lot of time on getting comfortable first with who they are; really, really solid, and comfortable with what it's going to mean to engage people on these really core visceral issues of human identity. And then comfortable as an educator, teacher, administrator and leader." She said that she had been allowed the time to do this herself and that it had been invaluable in shaping her core beliefs as a leader. Dr. Astaire instead talked about his own leadership development and how updated leadership training programs for new and continuing presidents had helped him continue to grow and to pass on his own leadership wisdom to others. He also glowingly reviewed the recent trends of utilizing leadership approaches borrowed from other sectors and how this had enriched higher education leadership training programs and the leaders themselves.

Ask a college president to describe their leadership approach and they may launch into a deep and passionate discussion about their leadership philosophies and how they applied them on the job. Based upon their answers, presidents spent a lot of time reflecting on their own leadership and the leadership of other college presidents. While I was unable in interviews to get them to directly compare their performance to others, presidents would offer an aside about a recent leadership event in higher education or share a time when they observed and learned from an exceptionally good or poor leader. Based upon these responses, I concluded that leadership philosophies also played a role in how presidents responded to student activism on campus. These philosophies included their personal and professional identities and also how presidents viewed themselves as leaders. On religious campuses, presidents described feeling a moral

obligation to respecting student feedback and implementing their ideas as they aligned with their values and campus mission. At liberal arts colleges, presidents believed their leadership aligned with a servant leadership model (Greenleaf, 1977), where their primary responsibility was to cultivate a sense of trust and community on their small, mostly residential campuses. President Cunningham, Foliage University, who had decades of presidential experience, gave a rehearsed but effective leadership philosophy in his answer: "I think that the role of university president is sort of three-fold. One is to make certain that you set the tone of values for the institution. Secondly, that you hire really good people and let them do their job and you not try to micromanage. Third thing is to make certain that you are their fullback protecting them and also running through issues so that in the end the buck does stop with you on a number of these programs and efforts." President Robbins' response demonstrated a growth mindset (Dweck, 2006) approach to leadership, asserting that it was important to practice and grow as a leader because, "the traits of a good leader are honed with repetition and so getting out and learning and practicing and getting, again, repetition as a leader is really important."

Presidents developed their leadership philosophies and what a good or poor response to student movements looked like based upon not only what they did and how those experiences turned out but also by watching others who they worked for over the years; not just presidents but other leaders on campus. President Tallchief, Desert Rock University, said that, "one of the beautiful things about the academic journey is that you get a lot of chances to see different approaches…you learn a lot if you watch other peoples' approaches, both what works and what doesn't work. I'm definitely shaped by example and past experience. Also, I think just shaped by developing a deep understanding of human beings and working on being an effective listener." Some presidents learned from observing campus reactions to student movements when they were

not in leadership roles. President Tharp said she was disturbed by the jitteriness of campus police when she took part in a student protest, worried how police may respond if tensions had escalated further. President Kelly said he learned by watching student reactions to campus policies when he worked in student affairs. He observed the resolve and peaceful protests by students at Cooperative University when South Africa anti-apartheid protestors were arrested and said it was an experience that stuck with him, even meeting a protester in person years later.

What Makes a Tempered Radical?

Prior experiences and presidential background can offer some insights into whether or not a president may be acting as a tempered radical in her role. Interview data was used to explore how presidents may respond based upon displaying tendencies or the background of a tempered radical, including how they perceived student activists, their approach to responding, and the response or resolution. Meyerson and Scully's (1995) concept of tempered radicals provides an understanding of why organizational insiders may participate in activism at their workplace. Ashford and colleagues (1998) have used tempered radicals to understand how organizational change occurs as a result of individual or collective action from within an organization. Presidents have a central role in initiating, continuing, and committing to such organizational change, either due to their own goals or past commitments to students, or to new demands brought forth to the administration. However, the work of tempered radicals is not necessarily recognized as the type of activism that may initially spring to mind such as protests, marches or organizing a list of demands. Rather, tempered radicals operate within the confines of their organizational system to effect incremental change. The work of tempered radicals may be more nuanced than traditional activism but is still recognizable through values, actions, and responses to students. Tempered radicals "are not heroic leaders of revolutionary change; rather, they are

cautious and committed catalysts who keep going and who slowly make a difference" (Meyerson, 2003, p. 5). Presidents in this study who had qualities of tempered radicals were still going to try and keep their jobs and work "*within* systems, not against them" (p. 7). But they were also going to seek out ways to respond to student activists to further mutual goals of social progress even, at times, pushing against established systems, stakeholders, or policies. When these values aligned, presidents in the study believed that students and the campus were beneficiaries of this work. Presidents are in a unique leadership role with the potential to impact and influence their institutions as tempered radicals to perhaps an even greater degree than other staff, faculty or administrators due to their inherent positional power. Additionally, Birnbaum's (1992) study of presidents showed that student leaders were responsive to presidential statements, because they believed presidents were responsible for protecting their interests in social progress. A recent study by Barnhardt and colleagues (2018) also found that consistent and sustained public advocacy by campus leaders led to positive gains related to campus climates and diversity. The scholars further suggest that in addition to advocacy through means of communication and hiring demographic diversity across the university (including general staff) benefited the campus. Such actions would likely not be considered as radical by most observers but indicate a level of tempered radicalism enacted over time in a leadership role.

Interview responses indicated different priorities and values, empathy toward student activists, and paths to resolution by presidents. While I did not directly ask participants if they identified as a "tempered radical" or even an activist, the questions they answered about related issues helped me to identify qualities a tempered radical might have used in their role. Table 6.1 shows presidential responses and backgrounds that could indicate a president's tendency to behave as a tempered radical. I illustrated some values of each president using the following

interview questions: 2) What is your proudest accomplishment in your time at [institution name]? and 6) How have your experiences as a student or faculty member influenced your approach to working with student activists? I also took into consideration responses to: 1) How would you describe the students of [institution name]? and 3) Campuses have been facing a lot of pressure from students in the past several years, please walk me through how you respond to collective student concerns?

Table 6.1 President Values and Background

Name	Institution	Accomplishment	Prior activism	Executive team
Acosta	Kind College	Successful merger with large university; led transparent and communicative process	Yes	Close-knit team; meets 2-3 times per week
Astaire	Plains state system	Moving system to student-centered approach, academic program improvements	Yes	Clear communication; leadership trainings
Cole	College of the Saints	Reworking academic majors to be more workforce-relevant	Yes	Weekly meetings; extra morning meetings as needed
Copeland	Tumbleweed State College	Bringing (in form of residential requirement) freshmen on campus	No	Clarity of expectations, open mic time at meetings
Cunningham	Foliage University	Increased retention rates	No	Focused on one-on-one relationships
Duncan	Harvest College	Built up marketing and communications capacity	No	N/A
Fonteyn	Southern State University	Patient safety at hospital; hiring of faculty; internationalization; environmental policy	No	Weekly meetings that included time for impromptu connections on the executive team; regular social events
Fosse	Celsius State College	Expanded residence halls	No	N/A

Graham	Astonishing University	Growing institution while increasing access	No	Close executive team with yearly retreat
Hawkins	Boomerang University	Buildings; also improving grad rate; improving student diversity & affirmative action officer	No	Builds trust by allowing them to work through problems first but also backing them up and communicating, also feels it is important to close the loop with students by issuing a response from the president
Hines	United University	Pioneer in experiential learning	No	N/A
Horton	Clive College	Increasing academic excellence and national reputation of college	No	Open lines of communication; connection of chaplain to executive team
Kelly	Cooperative University	Addressing institution's history of slavery	Yes	N/A
King	Grey College	Addition of two new academic programs: nursing and engineering	No	United around mission and university/religious values
Limon	Miscellaneous college	Creating pipeline program with local schools to increase diversity and access to the institution	No	Trusts them and will delegate and involve where appropriate
Nijinsky	Proactive University	Fund raising campaign; built more support from the board	No	Give a lot of respect and show appreciation
Nureyev	New England State	Getting institution to point where they viewed themselves as a private liberal arts institution rather than a public comprehensive	No	Small team of about 6-8 people, met often, although weren't as nimble on response to students in the example that was given
Pavlova	Coastal University	N/A	No	Regular meetings; wrote strategic plan together
Robbins	Rookie University	Short tenure thus far, but was proud of building a strong leadership team through hiring and training	No	Has a weekly forecast and check in meeting
Robinson	Presidential University	Increased retention and graduation rates	No	Builds trust prior to anything arising; important to

				communicate and then hand off issues as appropriate
Rogers	Raptor University	Increased access	Yes	Collaborative and communicative cabinet so no one is undermined
Shawn	Rivers University	capital campaign #1, then adding engineering program and creating an innovation center	No	Has weekly Monday morning 2 hour meeting
Smuin	East Sunrise University	Fundraising and buildings; scholars residential community	No	Open door policy
Tallchief	Desert Rock University	Increasing grad rate, esp. for students of color	No	Close-knit and strong communication; believes in listening and trusting in team
Taylor	Skyline College	Building stronger alliance between governing board and leadership of the university; also elevating university's status on US News and World Report rankings	No	Business-like approach to meeting and communication
Tharp	Petite University	Academic, focusing in on specialties rather than being all things to all people	Yes	"Five dysfunctions of a team"; annual leadership retreat
Weidman	University of Beachtown	Construction; new residence halls and wellness center; fundraising	No	Bi-weekly meetings; open office hours

While my data does not provide enough information for a classification system of tempered radicals in this study, I propose reflecting on how presidents: 1) valued diversity or student-centric initiatives by reporting them as their proudest accomplishment; and 2) in describing students, ascribed some value or respect (as opposed to cynicism) to student activism and engagement. Additionally, I wanted to see which presidents had a history of activism and whether or not that influenced their perceptions of student activism. President Shawn had a particularly positive view of activists and said, “most of my engagement with students who are kind of activists is positive. They wanted something that I thought was good.” Shawn then

utilized his position to assist students in achieving their goals, which he believed benefitted the students and campus.

Some presidents spoke of sympathizing with their students and their issues while a few others focused on the immaturity, inexperience, and lack of institutional knowledge held by their students. Presidents who held the latter beliefs were more cynical about students and student activism and, at times, suggested some variation of a "wait it out" or even an "ignore" approach. Presidents that focused on sympathizing or working with students also spoke about the importance of building trust with student leaders. These relationships also represented a strategy for prevention of disruptive student movements. President Hawkins said that he built trust because, "I think early on I was responsive to students. I do realize that sometimes the demands are more than a campus can go along with. I always try to be very careful not to over commit early on because then you can get into situations where you're backtracking. And if you do that, boy can you lose students." President Shawn agreed, saying, "you do want to be available to discuss with students on a continuing basis what the issue is. You want them to see you as someone they can trust to tell what it is that's bothering them or what they want. I think they need to see you as being honest. You can't tell them you're going to do something and then you don't do it." Both Hawkins and Shawn said they did not automatically concede to student demands, but instead prioritized responsiveness, communication, and accountability.

Presidents of larger institutions were more likely to value fundraising, building new buildings, or academic prestige or programs compared to presidents of smaller, liberal arts universities. Presidents of rural colleges were also less likely to be focused on issues of diversity, equity and inclusion compared to urban or suburban institutions. These themes are reflective of the work typically done by college presidents at various sizes and prestige, with presidents at

large prestigious colleges facing pressure to fundraise, build new buildings, and engage in other development efforts designed to attract more students. Presidents at rural colleges may be more reflective of the institutional and geographic political leanings, where issues surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion are viewed as more contentious when interacting with local or state conservative lawmakers.

Best practices

Recommended best practices naturally emerged from interview responses and data collection of campus protests. Presidents shared what worked well, what did not work, what they wished they had done or known about, and how they would prepare for another student movement or even campus crisis. The areas in which best practices were best defined were regarding how presidents engaged their executive teams and their tactics for prevention. These preventative tactics were building relationships with students, establishing and maintaining an on campus presence, and ensuring that there were policies in place in anticipation of student needs. Additionally, presidents were asked to what extent they believed a president was responsible for building an inclusive campus environment and how they believed one could create an inclusive campus environment. Given that many of the greatest challenges facing institutions where students are making demands have to do with issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion, addressing the formation of an inclusive campus is paramount to understanding the significance and impact of student movements. President responses on fostering an inclusive campus environment focused on hiring practices, creation and staffing of committees on important issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and championing social justice issues at the institution.

Executive Teams

Executive team members were key stakeholders who supported presidents in responding to student activists. Presidents worked hard to establish cohesive teams and build trust so that communication and preventative approaches were widely shared. Such teams also helped in case of escalation so that a swift and appropriate response was issued by either members of the executive team or the president herself. Presidents would build this trust through a number of leadership and managerial approaches, gleaned from their observational or personal experiences and their own leadership philosophy or leadership development efforts. Nearly all respondents reported meeting weekly or bi-weekly with their executive cabinet to discuss contemporary issues on campus. These meetings were typically limited to the smaller executive group and allowed time for open discussion of issues, frequently labeled catchy names like a "dance card" or "open mic." Presidents utilized their executive teams to stay current on student issues and concerns across campus, with the goal of pre-emptively addressing any student concerns that could become a widespread or disruptive student movement. President Copeland of Tumbleweed State University made communication a priority for her team, and her mantra was, "when in doubt, shout it out." She added that, "if something is unclear, the best way to do all of that is to make sure we're all communicating with each other. So, we have during our cabinet meetings, always an opportunity for people to bring up other items, things that are happening." These preventative efforts were done to engage students and meet their needs, but also to minimize campus disruption or violence, which even those who supported student activism admitted could be distracting from other goals and initiatives of the university.

Tempered radical behaviors. Presidents built trust on executive teams to resolve student issues through reciprocal forms of issue selling (Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Dutton et al., 2001),

impression management (Goffman, 1959), and upward influence (Mowaday, 1978). Reciprocal meaning that members of the executive team engaged in these behaviors to assert themselves with presidents, and that presidents engaged in these behaviors to get team members on board with their responses to students. For presidents, issue selling could take place when they presented staff with student movement issues requiring a public response. Issue selling could also be used by presidents pressuring executive team members to resolve student issues. Issue selling may be used to bring attention to a student issue that had not yet become a movement, or a movement that had not yet escalated to become overly contentious. Building trust was important to create a culture where individuals were not afraid to speak up or offer feedback for fear of retribution. Presidents who had an open forum like the "dance card" or "open mic" appeared to be genuinely open to issue selling from within their executive teams and also encouraged executives to communicate with each other. As found in the study by Ashford et al. (1998), the perceived favorability of issue selling in an organization increased willingness of people to sell gender-equity issues, emphasizing the importance of organizational culture over individual identity. When a president fosters this type of executive environment, support of issues by the president could also make issue selling easier between members of the executive cabinet to gain the support he or she may require resolving an issue. President Tallchief emphasized that transparency and communication were the most important to issue-selling because, "a lot of times, in my experience, issues are a little more complicated than the students, sort of asking for things. Many times, the institution is a hundred percent supportive and has already got wheels in motion but maybe hasn't been as good about communicating that change or [is] not effectively sharing that information." As Tallchief illustrated, an important component

of issue selling was continual communication as the issue was being sold or advocated for, which benefited all parties in finding a suitable resolution.

Interview data showed presidents engaging in impression management to a lesser extent than issue selling with their executive teams. Any impression management done by presidents was more likely to be directed at board members or political stakeholders with influence over the president's position. President King engaged in impression management with his executive cabinet at Grey College, ensuring that the cabinet worked through issues together and would refer back to the university's mission and ask, "is this consistent with what the mission calls us to be about?" He added that it was important to externally presented a united front since, "we all don't agree with each other, on a variety of different things but we have a cabinet covenant as well where we say that you know, we are going to work towards consensus on any given issue. But when consensus is not arrived, we will still attempt to represent the will of the cabinet in unanimity." President Copeland also was concerned with campus-wide and outward-facing impression management efforts to communicate administrative priorities. She always considered, "what is an outwardly visible sign that we're an inclusive campus? Or what's an outwardly visible sign that we welcome diverse people or diverse thoughts or open conversation? What are the outwardly visible signs of that? That then goes into, well what does the campus look like? What do people experience…how we behave within the buildings and such. We always want to be representing who we are and who we symbolize even if nobody's here to do it."

The other group where presidents said they made efforts to manage impressions was with students. It was important to presidents that students knew what was being done on campus to address student concerns, and this came down to communication and working to be a responsive president to when student issues were presented. For example, President Shawn said that, "to me

it's managing the communication. Understanding what it is that they [students] want or what they don't want and then keeping that channel open for them to talk to you about it." It was important to President Shawn that he manage the impressions that the students held of him and his executive team. Unfortunately, the interview questions asked did not lead to any significant answers about executive team members engaging in impression management with presidents. Rather, about one third of presidents instead spoke about the importance of supporting their executive team members, either by building up their confidence, allowing them to vent or discuss issues with them, or mentoring team members regarding responses to students.

There is interview evidence that presidents engaged in upward influence to advocate for organizational change to political leaders and board members. These people were the potential "supportive political elites" (McCarthy & Zald, 1977) that presidents may want to attract to their own advocacy of student issues when working within constraints that originate above their positional power. The president's own words did not provide much evidence of upward influence from the executive team to the president. It did appear, based upon findings in preceding chapters, that students who engaged in upward influence efforts had an impact on presidents and their decision-making. Executive team members may also have had this impact on presidents, it is just not evident from the responses in this study. Or, since upward influence in organization theory explains how the influence source (the tempered radical), the leader or top manager, and the organizational context can affect the type of strategy employed by the tempered radical to nudge for organizational change (Mowaday, 1978), perhaps the president as tempered radical was simply engaged in "asserting influence" with their teams.

Therefore, presidents in the sample engaged in each of these three behaviors to some extent with either board members or political stakeholders or within their executive teams. The

most significant behaviors used in executive teams were issue selling and impression management. This was due to the interactions between the executive team members in organizations were there was less hierarchy compared to top-down organizations and also where presidents were receptive to input and encouraged transparent communication across their executive teams. Presidents engaged in upward influence with board and political stakeholders to the extent that they pursued what they needed from those higher in the power structure of the institution.

Techniques for building trust. Presidents must intentionally build trust and leadership skills on their teams through ongoing efforts that create positive conditions for issue selling and upward influence. They did this through a few different ways: 1) regular meetings and ongoing communication; 2) trainings, retreats and skill development through shared experiences; and 3) a culture of accountability.

All presidents said that they held regular cabinet meetings, but the frequency and structure of the meetings varied. Presidents with smaller teams reported meeting twice weekly, while presidents of larger institutions met once per week or even more infrequently. President Nureyev said that, "I met once or twice a week with the cabinet which was simply the three or four vice presidents and my executive associate and that was it. We did problem solving." President Robinson agreed that trust should be built during regular interactions and said that, "trust isn't really built during crises and issues. It may be enhanced, but the actual building really is more of a mundane, day-to-day blocking and tackling issue that occurs with how you conduct the business. For instance, one of the things when I hire anybody who may end up being in the cabinet, my discussion with them is that, you're being hired to ensure that you participate in everything that happens at the university…Everybody feels value and that tends to be a

foundation upon which trust is built." Regular meetings and communication were consistent across presidents in the sample who held longer tenures.

President Duncan talked about her efforts to create a unified administrative approach to working with students and student leadership at Harvest College. After two years of disjointed communication between staff and students, she refocused their efforts and said, "there's a book called 'Becoming a Student Ready Campus,' we're really committed to pushing those ideas in book groups and discussions throughout the entire campus. The staff and the faculty. As part of the effort to increase student engagement and be more responsive to the variety of needs that students have, so, in effect, being ready for them rather than them expecting them always to be ready for us." Duncan wasn't the only president to use a book as a touchstone of culture and shared mission and purpose. Presidents Tallchief, Graham and Tharp also used books on management and diversity to guide conversations and trainings on their teams. This shared experience also created shared terminology that facilitated greater trust and communication on executive teams.

Several presidents said that they built trust by establishing a culture of accountability for the executive team. This included the president's accountability to their team and the team members being accountable and responsive to one another. President Fonteyn focused on the latter, and said she had team members each create and present regularly on their portfolio to the entire cabinet. She emphasized that the portfolio "isn't just a way of deflecting responsibility from the president, this is a way of creating accountability. It's impossible for the president to do everything. If I've given you responsibility for parking and transportation and the cross walks aren't clearly marked or the trees have grown over the lights so that drivers can't see student pedestrians, or whatever the case is, I have to have somebody to hold accountable for that and

say, this was your job, you need to get this done." President Cunningham focused on the former and said that, "I think a lot of presidents try to hide; they try to put it off onto other people. I believe in running a university like a matrix organization which is that we are all responsible and we rise and fall together and even though we have a dean of students or a vice president for x or y that a university president can't and should not hide behind a bureaucracy. I think you need to be fully engaged. And you need to get everyone else engaged so you have really a collective approach to whatever the crisis of the moment may be." These presidents entrusted responsibility to their teams in a way that respected their expertise and roles but also supported them as needed.

Preventative Measures

Conversations with presidents naturally lead to what they believe are best practices for interacting with student activists and communicating decisions around student movements. This theme emerged organically as presidents described their relationships with students and staff—they were never directly asked what they did for preventative measures. In many cases, presidents described what they had personally done as best practices. They also cited recent examples from higher education publications on what good and bad leadership during student movements looked like. Of greatest significance was their emphasis on preventing student unrest from becoming a full-fledged movement on campus. Negative reactions to leadership and student movements in the news stemmed from believing that there had not been enough preventative groundwork done by the president, or that the response to student demands had not been swift or communicated effectively. For example, President Robbins of Rookie University said he thought that most disruptive student movements could be prevented, because "most student activists, you'll know their concerns before they're out protesting and often you will have met with them before they're out protesting because protesting is often a last resort." He

said that protesting was often an indication that something or someone had failed students along the way, and he tried to prevent protests because, “hopefully I’ve responded, or we’ve responded in some way prior to that even becoming something that’s public.” This was a sentiment shared by most presidents in the study, that protests or disruptive demonstrations were a learning experience and a last resort, but that student issues are best resolved before escalating to such a degree.

Presidents with long tenures (and other measures of success) tended to engage in preventative measures (policies, relationships, student government) to keep up with student demands before they reached the point of becoming a movement. There was some evidence of newer and younger presidents like Robbins engaging in preventative tactics as well, but by and large it was the veteran presidents that expounded on their tactics. The most engaged and successful presidents employed prevention techniques that include building strong relationships with student leaders, setting the example of an inclusive leader, and immediately addressing concerns before they gained further media attention or grew in size. Presidents in the study with long tenures at their institutions also spent a great deal of effort building trust in the executive team to inform and support one another, as discussed in the previous section. Presidents purposefully endeavored to bolster student faith in the executive team so that: 1) no single person kept getting “beaten up” by student demands; and 2) students did not just rush to the president when they needed something, bypassing other administrators or established lines of communication.

In crafting the dissertation proposal, I researched student activist tactics but had not considered the area of tactics for presidents. Data analysis revealed that one of the biggest areas of potential study is in the leadership tactics for prevention of student movements. This may be

because such tactics could be generally classified as behaviors that good leaders exhibit; even so, preventive measures were an interesting finding relating both to leadership and student activists. Even though presidents most often expressed the view that student movements benefitted campus and the students, presidents also recognized that by the time an issue or topic on campus became a student movement, it was most often because students felt that they had no other avenue to broadcast their message to campus administration. Presidents with longer tenures and what they described as good relationships with students engaged in several leadership behaviors that they believed led to greater campus communication and harmony: 1) build relationships with student leaders and/or student government; 2) have a strong on-campus presence; 3) create policies that guarantee student safety, and; 4) ensure ongoing communication with the campus community regarding progress on previous issues brought forth by students (racial bias, LGBTQ, etc.) since new students join the institution each year.

Build relationships with students. Presidents across large and small universities believed that building relationships with students was key to preventing student dissatisfaction and eventual protest or movement. Nearly half of respondents said they built strong relationships with student government leaders each year, since student leaders would either surface topics of concern to presidents to effect change or at least provide a heads-up to mounting issues on campus. President Acosta said he heard of issues sometimes, "through student government where they would approach me through a formal meeting. Sometimes it was during town halls. These town halls were organized by the student government association, but they were really an open mic." President Copeland said she built a strong relationship with student government leaders, who developed a process for raising concerns. This way, "even when there is a dispute or a concern, they bring it forward through process. Through their student government association or

through some form of active organization or group." President Shawn met regularly "with the student government officers, usually the president and the vice president. We had a student member on our board of governors, so you had that person who you had regular contact with who typically was very helpful in giving me kind of the lay of the land about what students were thinking."

President Taylor spoke of his admiration for student leaders and their commitment to improving campus life. He said that, "with eight years of being president the most consistent, won't call it demands, student action has been just to continue to improve things at the college…but I think the most consistent theme has been this student government activism and it hits all bases. I mean, they're interested in housing, they're interested in the meals, they're interested in where their tuition goes. I think it's also impressive, it's a very responsible group of students and very impressive, great conversation." This strong relationship between the president and student government over the course of his presidency led to what he believed were many beneficial improvements for the institution, as well as a legacy of capable and impressive student government leadership. President Cunningham also consistently interacted with students and student leaders, telling me that, "last night, I had over a group of student leaders asking them exactly, what are the issues that are hot? What are the things you want to discuss? And then we could sit there and discuss them, and I find out more from them. I run my own focus groups a lot and I ask other people to do that." Cunningham's approach ensured that, for the most part, he was not surprised by anything that arose and he was also able to continually address student needs through established paths of providing feedback and bringing about progress on campus.

Presidents made sure that strong relationships were not just between themselves and student leadership, but also between their staff and executive team members and students. For

example, President Robbins said that he made sure to "have a strong student affairs team, student success team that is able to talk to students, make students aware of things. You want to make sure that you have a good working relationship, respectful working relationship with the student body leadership and the senators." He added that, "you just make sure that you have good lines of communication between the administration and students." President Hawkins agreed that a strong team that nurtured relationships prior to a student movement eruption was important, and "if you can build up some political capital that you're trying to be proactive, that you want there to be an environment of tolerance and respect—I always want to get respect in there because I think that's so important—that when incidents happen they don't blow up on you. At least they won't blow up as big as they would if you were just responding to those." He believed his proactive stance on relationships between himself, staff, and students helped to avert future crises. President Graham of Astonishing University also mentioned this tactic, believing it enabled her institution to solve problems before emotions began to run high.

In another example of building trust, President Limón said he intentionally created a culture where students felt heard and student affairs leaders were empowered. He said that:

> We've really tried to build those trusting relationships, so people don't feel like they have to come and take over the administration building in order to be heard. We say, look, if there's something you want to talk about, let's talk. Certainly, the office of student affairs has played a critical role. The vice presidents and their staffs have been very helpful in that regard…we've tried to engage students as much as we can and also to make sure we keep in mind that we are an educational institution which means as we have these difficult conversations with students, we also think at every turn about what it means to educate.

Limón's response echoes earlier findings that presidents believe part of their educational mission is to instruct students and help them learn through their activism and dealings with campus administrators.

On-campus presence. Many presidents that were involved and engaged on campus described regular interactions with students. President Shawn, who took multiple approaches to building relationships and being present on the Rivers University campus believed that, "those pro-active steps, being visible and accessible are really important." However, presidents who served on smaller campuses had greater opportunities for building relationships with students due to the residential and community culture inherent to many smaller campuses. Several shared that they regularly walked around campus and students would greet them by name. President Graham said she took a daily walk around Astonishing University where students would stop and chat with her on a regular basis. These interactions were made possible by intentional efforts by presidents to be present on campus. This took several forms: informal interactions with students during meals or between classes, teaching undergraduate or graduate courses, attending student events, or meeting with student leaders. President Shawn said he "would eat in the student, well, there were several student dining halls. I made a practice of trying to eat in one of those every week. Not with any kind of invitation where specific people were invited, nothing like that. I'd let them know I was coming and just show up." President Cunningham said of his students, "I adore them, and they look at me as their grandfather, I think, and I do these crazy things. I go out and visit with them all the time in the residence halls, Friday or Saturday night or both I'll go at 9:30 or 10:00, take a couple of students with me and they give me a list of all the parties and all the things going on and I'll show up and surprise them." Cunningham, who worked at a variety of institutions over the course of his lengthy career said that he did this especially because, "at very large institutions, I feel that it's the role of the president to personalize the institution and the best way you do it is you get out and get engaged with the students in so many different ways you possibly can." While it may seem to take additional time and effort, a number

of presidents took this informal time to meet with students, which they said helped them stay ahead of issues that could surface. Many also believed that it opened the lines of communication with students so that they felt comfortable contacting the president in the future.

The other most popular forms of sustaining a campus presence were holding regular community conversations or town halls and teaching an undergraduate or graduate course on campus. President Weidman said he, "used to hold what they called fireside chats and made myself available to students. I was quite present on the campus. It was a small school; I mean it was four thousand students. It was not a big state institution so students, in general, knew who I was, and they had access to me." President Shawn said that he had an undergraduate class he "taught every year. And so, I had classroom experiences with these students." President Robinson also taught a course each year to PhD students which helped him be present with students but also helped him maintain his identity outside of the presidency.

The culmination of these techniques to build relationships with students had the result of cultivating a campus environment where students, faculty, staff, and leadership collaborate to address important issues. This is illustrated by the plan from President Horton of Clive College to quickly address student interest in the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. Clive College was a small liberal arts institution where he and his faculty regularly interacted with students and student leaders. Horton said that he and the faculty attempted to support students and also pre-empt student demonstrations by working through concerns and emotions as a campus community. He said that:

> After Black Lives Matter broke, the faculty I think did a great thing, they said, the first day of class is what is sometimes called syllabus day, you don't do much, so why don't we…try to pick a topic that was relevant to the subject matter. So, if you tried teaching a course on China, our person teaching a course on China did a discussion that day on discrimination and diversity in China versus the U.S., so how the Uyghurs are getting

> treated or other minorities, Hispanics or Blacks, in America. And I think it went over very well.

By keeping current on what was happening in the country and on campus, President Horton and the faculty and administrative communities on campus were able to engage with students on campus and in the classroom on BLM. This approach didn't mean that Horton had addressed everything that students wanted but that the open conversation signaled an allyship between his administration and students.

In another example where an ongoing campus presence yielded open lines of communication, President Limón said that Miscellaneous College had "a pretty strong sense of community and so…are more likely to actually say to us, here's an issue we're concerned about and we want to be in dialogue about it. They're not as likely, I would say, to start with an adversarial approach." President Limón credited this relationship to a campus presence, and said, "In, part it's because we've worked really hard as an administration and I think are very accessible to students. I mean, the students see me, I'm very visible around campus. Our vice president for student affairs is at student events just about every night of the week. The administration is not distant on this campus." Presidents who seek to build relationships with students would greatly benefit from an increased campus president, such as that of President Limón.

Policies. Presidents admitted to leaning heavily on campus policies when determining how to respond to student movements. In particular, presidents who encountered free speech issues would refer back to campus and federal policies for consistency in response that was also protecting student free speech. As Sun and McClellan (2020) point out, many presidents do not consider state laws that govern free speech to the extent that they should—this was reflected in the interviews from presidents, who did not refer back to state policies on free speech. President

Tharp, Petite University, cited policies as an important consideration to prevent confrontation, saying, “if there is a culture of engagement and mutual respect in listening, and if there are operational policies and procedures that can give guidance, then questions like if somebody says, hey, I want to bring in this very controversial speaker, the relationship is there, the policies and procedures guide, it’s a collaboration and not a confrontation.” Additionally, presidents used lessons learned from previous movements to establish policies intended to protect student safety. President Kelly said that Cooperative University’s Title IX policies around institutional reporting helped him to establish reporting that he and students had advocated for when he was in an administrator role. President Cunningham even established a separate team to handle campus crises, which included student activism that escalates to threaten student safety. He said, “I’m a big believer in being pre-emptive and not waiting for things to happen. And if your team, the folks that are working with various components of the university, it’s their job to make sure that we understand what the issues are and we can deal with them.” A couple of presidents had overlap in policies for campus crises and disruptive student movements and a few instituted response teams with shared accountability between crises and student movements.

Communication. Communication is inherent in the above preventative practices recommended by presidents. However, communication in two specific areas is important to highlight: 1) ongoing, campus-wide communication so that institutional knowledge and progress is passed on to incoming freshmen; 2) communication that makes responses, initiatives and progress transparent to students, faculty and administrative staff.

Over half of respondents shared the importance of communicating what they were doing to address student needs and past student demands. This ongoing communication is more important on a college campus than within a traditional organization because each year an

entirely new group of students joins the university. This group lacks the historical knowledge and context to understand the activism the preceded them and also what was being done. However, it is the responsibility of the president to communicate this history, progress, and future plans to new and existing students. President Pavlova captured the purpose of ongoing communication, when she described that, "the issue with students is, they're on campus for four years or so and if you're planning on building some, whether it's building a building or whatever is planned and it's not going to happen while they're on campus, they're going to demonstrate against it. It maybe something that might take a couple of years to materialize. They also don't see the changes that occur on the campus. Their experience is very short-lived. They don't have the overall picture of a university or a campus." However, without communication or context, these students cannot be expected to know prior university plans or activism around specific issues.

Therefore, presidents and their administration are responsible for educating incoming students and student movement stakeholders. Part of this education can be in the form of communicating what is and isn't possible within the confines of the university and its policies. President Robbins shared with me that, "yes, consensus and alignment is the goal, but if you can't achieve that then at least, hopefully, you can achieve a belief from the students that they might not agree with what the president thinks, or this policy, but at least I understand how they're thinking about it." This transparency and understanding built relationships and trust with students. President Kelly also worked to be transparent in his communication because, "we don't hide it and what's more, if we tried to hide it, it would be found about anyway. Shape the way in which you're dealing with this and try to be present. That's another thing is, I have found that, ultimately, it's best when I'm present; meaning, somehow I'm viewed as connected to what's

going on." Kelly's take was that transparency is important to build credibility, but also credibility is gained when students view the president as someone who is leading the institution and actually aware of what is happening on campus.

Inclusive Campus Environment

President responses to student movements have the potential to facilitate or improve upon an inclusive campus environment. Interview responses confirmed the view that leaders are responsible for organizational outcomes and that followers look to leaders for strategic direction. All presidents asserted that they are dedicated to creating an inclusive campus environment. The extent to which each president feels responsible for creating that environment varied slightly in their responses. When asked, all but a couple of presidents, without pause, said they believed that the president is entirely responsible for setting the tone and culture for an inclusive campus. Where they diverge is how much a president is responsible and also in the meaning of "inclusive." President Robinson told me that the president had a role that was, "significant but not solely responsible. Sometimes that gets misconstrued. I think it's a participatory type of activity. The president can be close to it, but he or she can't be solely responsible for it. I think you have to find that appropriate balance and make it clear to everybody that everybody has to participate in some way shape or form. You can't dictate that culture." President Taylor disagreed with President Robinson's assessment, and told me that, "it starts at the top so, I don't know if you want a number or percentage but you're one hundred percent responsible for creating an environment. You do it through your actions, you do it through your words…it really is kind of your fingerprint on the institution. You set the pace, you set the tone. You have the opportunity to truly impact the culture of the institution." President Tharp responded similarly, saying that the president is "completely responsible because they have the ultimate authority on

hiring and firing. They have the microphone, the pulpit. They set the tone…They are the culture bearer for that institution." President Nureyev, in a reflective tone, also told me that, "one hundred percent…the president is responsible, not for doing the work but for foregrounding the issues, providing an example and making the case…this is part of the basic work of a president in leading and fostering the community in which she or he works. That is very clear to me, I've never had any doubt about that. Insofar as I'm unhappy with my success in some areas, it is because I had at some points fallen short in that regard. Very clear to me." President Nureyev illustrates how the presidential role goes beyond that of a symbol to that of cultural leader, especially in issues of systemic inequities. Many presidents believed that they are not only symbols of the institution, but the tone, mission, and goals they set identify what is important to the institution. Therefore, they also are largely responsible for the culture of the university. Recommendations for best practices to create an inclusive campus emerged from my conversations. Below, data is used to illustrate the role presidents believed they play in creating an inclusive campus environment and how presidents used their roles to create a culture of inclusivity.

Hiring, staffing, and committees. Presidents suggested that they can take action by creating new positions (such as a Chief Diversity Officer) creating councils, opportunities for people to gather and discuss. President Nijinski had served at another liberal arts institution prior to his time at Proactive University where they had a Chief Diversity Officer (CDO), but his new institution did not have such a person. He said that over fifty percent of hist students were students of color, "and so I decided to create a Chief Diversity Officer." He cautioned against laying all of the diversity, equity and inclusion issues at this person's feet, however, stating that, "I think you don't want to let yourself and your other colleagues get off the hook by saying, well

we're going to have a Chief Diversity Officer and she's going to take care of all these issues to conclusion. On the other hand, you want to have someone at the table who has some power and certainly a voice to be able to point things out. I mean this has taken me a while because I'm very committed to the notion of diversity and inclusion." The hiring of the CDO and the commitment to diversity and inclusion meant that Nijinski was conscious of his role in further issues of equity, diversity and inclusion at his university. President Copeland also acknowledged the importance of commitment and action, saying that she had, "just created a presidents' commission on accessibility, but part of that is to signal inclusiveness, not just to signal but to live it. To provide visible opportunities." Both presidents, who are also tempered radicals, demonstrated the importance of making their commitments visible to the campus.

Champion social justice issues. Several presidents recognized their ongoing role in ensuring that they led an inclusive university. As Dr. Astaire noted, "a lot of the issues are fundamentally the same. We were arguing about inclusion and diversity and stuff like that in the 1970s. And the quality of instruction and all the rest." He reflected that progress on social justice issues required an ongoing commitment to change and listening to students. Tempered radical presidents demonstrated this commitment, as they took a leadership role in championing social justice issues on campus. Sometimes this was in response to student activism on the same issue. Other times, presidents and their executive teams made the connections on their own, and proactively addressed social justice issues on campus. President Kelly was most proud of his proactive approach to decentering historically inequitable narratives at his predominantly white institution (PWI). His administration, "engaged the history of our participation in the institution of slavery…we've known this for many, many years, we've taught it for more than three decades but, the engagement of the issue converged with a rather high profile set of incidents across our

country in. It was a particularly powerful time to engage these questions and we did so in a very forthright direct way." Kelly shared that his pride in the institution and his dedication to its mission are what led him to engage in this social justice work on campus.

Conclusion

Each president in this study has been shaped by their personal and professional experiences, narratives, and values. Prior professional experiences such as observing other leaders or working in student affairs, were influential in how they responded to student activists. Additionally, the values held by presidents were reflected in their feelings toward student activists and their contributions to campus. Those that may have held leadership philosophies or identities similar to tempered radicals may be more likely to empathize and work with student activists, especially on issues related to diversity, equity and inclusion on campus.

Even though most presidents viewed student activism as a learning experience for students and opportunity for progress on campus, they still regarded disruptive protests with some hesitation, believing it indicated a level of failure on their part. Therefore, all presidents in the study engaged, to some extent, in preventative tactics to head off student movement escalation. A large number of presidents, especially those on smaller campuses, established and maintained an on-campus presence, and encouraged their executive team to do that same. This was primarily accomplished through informal gatherings, walking around campus, or teaching a graduate or undergraduate course. Other presidents took great care to build relationships with students. They often engaged with student leaders or government representatives, in addition to campus organizations and student activities. Students who had built relationships with executives were more likely to seek their input or counsel prior to organizing a movement or protest. Campus policies also helped to establish guidelines for presidential responses and ensure student

safety on campus. Even if there were escalation to disruptive protests, campus policies helped to prevent additional violence or unwelcome off-campus protestors. Finally, ongoing communication with existing and incoming students was important to maintaining a peaceful campus while also remaining accountable to students. Presidents recommended regular, consistent communication with student activists and other stakeholders to continue making progress on meeting demands and also to satisfy students who may not have the historical or current contexts of campus priorities. This finding of president preventative tactics is perhaps the most useful to practicing presidents who may wish to establish a campus culture focused on community, accountability, and progress.

Chapter 7 Discussion and Implications for Future Research

Throughout this research, I sought to explore and understand how presidents approached their responses to student movements on their own campuses and what factors may function—consciously or unconsciously—as considerations or constraints in this process. In an ideal form, a truly engaged, proactive president or campus would likely not have student movements occur, as these concerns would be addressed before becoming an issue. Alas, this is not reality, and therefore, student activism has essentially become part of the system of change at the university while still retaining some semblance of functioning outside of the organizational norms. Interview data revealed how presidents responded to students, their explanation as to why they responded in certain ways, and the steps they took as they planned to respond, including the timing of their responses. I also sought to discover what presidents thought changed about activism in higher education in the past ten years, including the proliferation of social media. There were also untapped leadership lessons embedded in the rich personal and professional experiences of presidents that could be used to help prepare new and current presidents how best to evaluate and respond to student movements on their own campuses. Finally, forces of mimetic and normative isomorphism appear to have an outsized influence on shaping responses. These forces escaped examination by presidents, who did not discern mimetic or normative practices from their individual personal or professional values. Unearthing and naming this tendency toward normative responses and preferencing legitimate or conventional student tactics could aid presidents in intentionally reflecting upon and seeking out unique and transformative responses

to student activism. This finding may be especially important to those presidents who consider themselves to be acting as tempered radicals in their leadership roles.

While a recent resurgence in student movement research coincided with the rise in student movements the past few years (HERI, 2016; Broadhurst & Velez, 2019), at the time I proposed this dissertation study, there was still a heavy reliance on the traditional canon of student activism, which championed the movements of the 1960s and 1970s. As was apparent to other researchers in the field of student movements, this literature required an update that addressed contemporary student movements in the last decade, and more importantly, the past five years. The presidents I interviewed have been present for much of this social movement history unfolding on our nation's campuses. In fact, some of the presidents in the study identified as having been the activist students protesting the Vietnam War, free speech, environmental, or academic issues. Others were new to their roles as anti-apartheid and subsequent anti-sweatshop movements and tactics were diffused to campuses across the country. Another group of presidents did not personally relate to the past activism but instead demonstrated in interviews that they were well-versed in the challenges facing students today. As demonstrated in the previous chapters, how college presidents view student activists have greatly changed; that is, leadership does not always label student activists as a nuisance or entity to be appeased or silenced in order to maintain appearances. While some contemporary examples demonstrate leadership failures (Mizzou, for example) in the face of student activism, the majority of presidents in this study described pride in their institutions, respect for students, and an unwavering commitment to student safety.

There were several key conclusions from this dissertation research. First, presidents expressed positive perceptions of student movements, describing them as necessary to campuses

progressing in issues of diversity, equity and inclusion, and as providing important learning and leadership experiences for students. Second, presidents were surprisingly accessible to student activists and most often responded to student activism by meeting with and attempting to work with students to reach a compromise or collaborate to find a resolution. In the timing of their responses, presidents shared that the best practices included immediately addressing the inciting incident (if one occurred), issuing an immediate campus-wide response, then researching the student demands and announcing a detailed and well-informed response, often including next steps for resolution. A further conclusion is based on interview data that illustrated the full extent of institutional and external constraints that exert influence over presidential responses to student activists. Institutional size, geographic location, public or private classification, and student demographics and academic interests were shown to influence presidential responses in interview data. Additionally, external constraints such as local, state, or federal policies affected presidents differently at private, public, or HBCUs, depending upon the nature of the issue brought forth by student activists. These types of policies and institutional type also affected how presidents went about communicating with others on a resolution, as FOIA and Florida's sunshine laws were heavily considered by presidents at institutions where these laws were relevant. Further, interview data showed that personal experiences of presidents guided their decision-making involving student activists. In particular, those with activist backgrounds as students, faculty, or administrators consistently expressed comprehensive understanding and support of student activism. However, this support was not limited to those with prior activist backgrounds, as the majority of presidents in the sample expressed support of student activists. In particular, many presidents had internalized leadership lessons from their prior work and observation of other presidents, concluding that student activism was valuable to their campuses.

Finally, the majority of campus presidents in the sample employed preventative tactics in their approach to student activism, attempting to stave of disruptive student tactics as best as they could through building relationships with students, establishing and maintaining an on-campus presence, creation of clear policies around campus safety and free speech, and effective ongoing communication around progress related to prior resolutions between student activists and campus administrators.

This study concluded that presidents today perceived student activism as a necessary component of the higher education learning environment, and expressed their recognition of its importance to students, campus and society. Student movements were generally not considered by presidents to be the failure of leadership or the disruptive force that they once were. And yet, there remained a hesitancy to engage with student movements in an entirely radical way or to expand the presidents' notions of acceptable or preferable tactics. Additionally, while presidents hold the potential power to disrupt normative practices around key student issues, few have taken the initiative to do so. The concluding chapter of this dissertation will first explore how the tensions contained in this dissertation's findings have implications for student movement theory and organizational theory. In particular, I will address how the study of leaders as organizational insiders or tempered radicals could expand the conceptualization of these theories. Next, implications for research will be discussed, including areas of future study in contemporary student movements and leadership responses. The third section will cover implications for practice, with a focus on preventative tactics employed by presidents, and will conclude with further contributions to the field of higher education leadership.

Implications for Theory

Three main bodies of literature informed the foundation of this dissertation: social and student movements, organizational theory, and research on the college presidency. Research on college presidents, while helpful to the development of this study, is not considered theoretical and is therefore covered in a subsequent section designed to inform presidential practice. Findings from this study make the greatest theoretical contributions to student movement literature and literature on organizational insiders, particularly related to organization insiders who may be considered tempered radicals. The following section will first detail implications for student movement theories, focusing on leadership considerations during student movements. The second part of this section will look at how college presidents may be considered the ultimate organizational insiders in organization theory as it relates to activism.

Student Movements

This study contributes to student movement theory by exploring the motivations, experiences, and contexts of college and university presidents as the subject of focus. Barnhardt (2019) posited that an organizational response is informed by the university's mission and values and the level of influence wielded by the campus president in these responses, based upon his personal experiences and positions on the students, campus activism, and take on power and authority. This study illuminates how each of these movements and leaders exist within social, geographic, political, and institutional contexts that cannot be extricated from their responses. In addition to this expansion of perspectives, this research adds to student movement theory by illustrating possible responses to student activists as outlined by presidents, offering insights into what they prioritize in terms of response and resolution.

Overall, this research contributes to student movement literature simply by joining other recent publications in studying contemporary student movements. This includes the use of social media in student movements as researched by Davis (2019), new research on identity-based student movements (Hoffman & Mitchell, 2016; Griffin et al., 2019; Linder et al., 2020) and institutional responses (Cho, 2018; Cho, 2020). As this dissertation research was underway, more research on the topic was published, indicating an increased awareness of leadership issues and attention to the topic of student movements. Just as the technological and social environments have rapidly changed in the past decade, so have student tactics, especially those employing social media and technology to increase awareness of activist campaigns (Davis, 2019). In response, presidents described how their prevention tactics and also the timing of their responses have changed.

Further, this research provides insights into the nature of "opposition" given to student movements, most often represented by the responses of college presidents. Presidents said that they perceived student movements as a positive force on campus and considered student activists as being motivated by wanting to "do something good," as President Copeland said. Presidents also acknowledged that the campus benefits from the labor of student activists. While presidents may have expressed some frustration with student activists who were violent, ill-informed, or influenced by external meddling, none of the sample participants referred to student activists as "troublemakers" or "problematic." The more likely perspective and approach was to delegitimize activists who chose not to engage in conventional, more acceptable forms of expressing dissent. In exploring their responses to student activism on campus, presidents revealed that they were most amenable to students that employed conventional tactics through mostly established or traditional channels of expressing dissent. This desire for normative behavior from student

activists elicits a normative response from presidents. While perhaps not groundbreaking, the validation of this process can lead to greater insights into student tactics, presidential responses, and further systemic change in higher education. Presidents often positively associated student activists who followed conventional channels with other leadership roles or student organizations on campus, people who often had already built working relationships with campus leadership. A portion of presidents in the sample had been activists themselves and identified with the efforts of students working for change. Finally, presidents perceived activism as a part of student learning that would develop leadership skills and a commitment to civic engagement. On this point, presidents were in agreement with practitioners and scholars that learning in the classroom should be applied to the student experiences on campus, including activism. Presidents also agreed that activism is part of reconciling the difference between personal experience and social or educational ideals (Barnhardt, 2019) and can also serve as a learning objective in and of itself, facilitating the development of civic engagement, leadership skills, and social justice awareness.

Interview data provided new perspectives helpful in understanding the nuanced relationships between college presidents and student activists, including why presidents chose to respond in certain ways. If presidents are not available to be interviewed for case studies of particular movements, this research allows for more informed speculation of their responses. For example, there is clear evidence that presidents consider the internal and external contexts of the institution and positional and institutional normative responses in determining how to respond to demands. These contexts should be considered in further case study analysis of presidential responses to student movements. Presidents in the sample also shared that it was important to have clear and ongoing communication to activists and students on issues, and that may not

always be accomplished in the way that it should. Therefore, understanding of the entire movement is improved when leadership perspectives are included in future research.

Documentation of Presidential Responses to Student Activism. The third contribution to student movement literature was detailing the steps presidents typically took to work with student activists, which revealed that the preferred resolution of presidents was the conventional approach of meeting with students on some type of compromise. The original model of presidents trying to support, repress or ignore student movements was difficult to unearth—that's not to say that presidents do not respond to student movements in different ways, but that, based upon this data, these approaches were not used in the historical ways they have been conceptualized. Instead, the most common response to student activism was for the president to first meet with student activists. This was done to accomplish one or more of the following: 1) understand demands and goals of the movement; 2) hold conversations and inform students of possibilities and limitations; 3) clarify misinformation or disinformation; 4) attempt to deescalate movements that had grown into large confrontations, protest movements or even violence; 5) collaborate on a plan to address demands and communicating progress; 6) place some of the work back on students to follow up or enlist students in the solution.

Finally, president responses from this study show which student tactics were the most effective at garnering the attention or support of college presidents. Based upon the responses of presidents, there are a few areas where students can build trust and appeal to college administrators to ensure that their demands are more likely to be met. Direct outreach to college presidents proved to be surprisingly effective, as presidents shared that they most often sought to meet with student movement leadership. Additionally, it was effective for student activists to recruit student government representatives to their cause, as these students already had

established relationships with presidents and had opportunities to upwardly influence their decisions, similar to what was found by Kezar (2012) recruiting others in positions of authority to the movement. Student activists who utilized data to demonstrate their case were also met positively by presidents. And those who took advantage of new leadership, as in the case of President Cole and LGBTQ policies at College of the Saints, were also successful in having their demands met. Ineffective student tactics were described by presidents as any sort of violence, refusal to collaborate or compromise, or lack of follow through on the part of the student activists. Finally, any tactics that presidents believed were primarily designed to serve a theatrical purpose (and not an actual desire for change) were not taken seriously and were described as ineffective.

Response to Lammers' Topology

I struggled to categorize examples from presidents into four typologies provided by Lammers (1977). During coding, one of my memos described how I was not finding examples of leader responses aside from some form of "join in." My initial conclusion was that concepts such as "fight off," "buy off," and "stand off" were either unapplicable to today's leaders due to a consensus that they were either unacceptable due to safety reasons or that presidents may lose their jobs if they employed these types of behaviors. Additionally, the "join in" typology was dominant because I found that presidents had normalized a certain set of responses based upon localized influences and generally accepted responses in higher education (Schneiberg & Soule, 2005). Sets of responses appear to align with the single typology of join in during my initial analysis, so I did not readily find examples of the other typologies. However, upon further reflection, I would like to offer some alternative and contemporary manifestations of each typology from these findings.

Buy off. In terms of the more traditional conception of "buy off," it seemed as though presidents who were likely to meet demands would do so more along the lines of "joining in," because they either agreed with what the activists had demanded, or their stakeholders or perhaps even public pressure had compelled them to "join in." However, I have come to categorize lesser efforts of meeting demands as an attempt to "buy off" student activists to deescalate and discourage further demonstrations. Presidents often "made concessions" to students when they reaffirmed prior commitments to practices, policies or initiatives that took time. This took the form of committees that were crafting policies, changes in hiring practices, building new buildings, or academic programs. For example, President Fonteyn had said that, "some of the things they had been asking for we had actually already done such as create the Department of African-African American Studies… hiring more black faculty and so on, we'd been working on that." This came up in several interviews and, to me, it was a bit more than just attempting to "buy off" students by appeasing them with concessions. It was also a bit of impression management, as presidents were happy to group prior commitments or projects with incoming demands from student organizers. It appeared as though presidents wished to gain additional credit for these "concessions" that weren't really concessions, at all.

Stand off. Barnhardt (2019) interprets "stand off" in contemporary encounters between university leadership and student activists as "pursuing a position of neutrality and largely waiting out the conflict through little or no organizational action on the activists' substantive claims" and also be a "tactic of disengagement or conflict avoidance" (p. 14). Thus, presidents may be delegitimizing student tactics or issues through lack of acknowledgement. The lack of acknowledgement could simply appear as ignoring students, which Dr. Astaire said he would do in cases where students did not respect his time through informed response or meeting schedule.

It could also take a more intentional form of ignoring, such as when President Pavlova described a university president completely ignoring student activists as he strode by them each morning, shutting himself in the office for the entire day. More common, however, was the tendency to encourage students who had not done their due diligence to go back to the drawing board. This happened when presidents recognized unedited demands sourced from national organizations, or when they observed students making claims that were clearly uninformed or untrue. Additionally, due to the emphasis on student safety, conflict avoidance was perhaps an important tactic to protect students. On the other side, it may be important for presidents to engage with activists whose agendas are not aligned with university values in order to make a clear statement as to what the university mission and values represent. Simply ignoring racist or other offensive activism will not foster an inclusive campus environment and instead is likely to engender feelings of fear or resentment among the targeted student populations.

Join in. Presidents most commonly cited examples of where they worked to join in or buy into the demands or requests made by student activists. This may partially be a bias of subjectivity where they more readily recalled positive outcomes or may be the most palatable and perhaps effective form of response, especially when student and president interests align. There were instances where presidents literally ran out to join students as when President Robbins left his office to support and speak with students on the front steps, or where the Provost at Southern State University joined a student rally at the president's request (and actually ended up getting injured, not by the students). However, most forms of "join in" were more nuanced than a physical joining or enthusiastic verbal or written support of protestors. Rather, presidents engaged by entering into a partnership with students to bring their solutions to fruition, or through what Jenkins and Eckert (1986) refer to as "channeling," saying that they think

"'channeling' is a more apt metaphor for analyzing the impact of elite patronage on social movements than the metaphor of controlling or coopting" (p. 828). In their work, Jenkins and Eckert used channeling to describe the bureaucratization of discontent, as social movement organizations, leaders, or participants were incorporated into an institutional setting, taking control of the movement out of the hands of the originators (1986). The authors found that such channeling can diminish the goals of the movement as established institutional channels are less welcoming to disruptions either via tactics or demands for systemic change. Jenkins (1983), in reference to Piven & Cloward (1977) recognized that the concern with channeling was that, "instead of focusing commitments and maximizing strategic flexibility, formalized organizations divert energies from mass defiance and provide political elites with a forum for propagating symbolic reassurances and thereby demobilizing mass defiance" (p. 544) Therefore, channeling movements into the hands of institutions versus organizers could have a detrimental influence on the effectiveness of the movement and achieving associated demands in the future. Barnhardt (2012) validated this finding in a higher education setting, concluding that when student activists engaged in co-partnership solutions through university-organized committees or working with staff, their tendency was to deescalate their dissention efforts (in the short term). Presidents have probably come to know this through their experiences in trying to balance the perception of a peaceful campus while also integrating progress student demands into the fabric of their campus communities. The shortfall to this approach, however, as with much of the progress enacted by tempered radicals, it that the institutionalization of such activism may result in de-radicalization of their demands. This process may even result in a slowdown for progress, planting seeds of animosity or frustration at lack of resolution or action on the part of administration, as we have seen with resurgent activism surrounding systemic racism in higher education (Ellis, 2020).

Fight off. As reported, presidents overwhelmingly emphasized the importance of student safety in formulating their response to student activists. This is seen in examples where the safety of students at UC Berkeley in the face of protests against the provocateur Milo Yiannopoulos speaking on campus took precedent over potential issues of free speech (Sun & McClelland, 2020). In this data, the typology of fight off is a good starting place to conceptualize this type of response, but the data shows that something different is happening in presidential responses today compared to the aggressive fight off tactics of the Civil Rights era (Lammers, 1977). Therefore, evidence in this research of "fight off" responses did not look like what "fight off" responses of the 1960s would have looked like. Rather, presidents in the sample described a couple of responses where students were silenced via the president's own response or an institutionalized response. In these examples, I found that "fight off" was another way of denying student activists the legitimacy of issuing a response. This differs from "stand off" in that presidents are not ignoring students and their tactics, but instead presidents are taking initiative to redirect student efforts or rationalizing their own decision to delegitimize student demands for one reason or another. The data showed that one way of doing this was labeling college students as "immature," therefore directing attention to the immaturity of student activists from the substance of their demands. There were two other scenarios where I propose that presidents engaged in a "fight off" tactic. First, when presidents deemed student mobilization to be based upon misinformation, they focused on countering the information and educating students foregoing engagement with students regarding their actual demands. President Hawkins experienced this when students organized around false claims made against student athletes on campus. "Fighting off" such misinformation may be the most effective tactic in eliminating further (and potentially harmful) spread of misinformation. The second possible form occurred

where there were instances of presidents who redirected attention on student tactics, rather than the substance of the student demands. President King described this reaction when students reacted negatively to a comment he made at a town hall regarding LGBTQ student policies. King focused his attention on clarifying the comment, shifting the focus away from the requests made by student organizers to his dissatisfaction with how he was characterized at the town hall.

Organizational Leaders as Ultimate Insider

Presidents do two things with their positional power, as we saw from this study's findings. First, presidents leverage their role of positional power to legitimate which tactics and channels of grievance are acceptable for student activists. Presidents also have the opportunity to exemplify behaviors of tempered radicals in their positions, either validating or legitimizing student tactics and demands, ultimately adopting some version of student demands. In such cases, presidents who act as tempered radicals have a unique role in shaping their campus environment and perhaps even changing other institutions within the system of higher education as their responses become normative or institutionalized as policy in higher education (Schneiberg & Soule, 2005). The president is the positional leader of the university and holds the upper hand in engagement with activism. Additionally, their situated power is mediated by some of the norming of responses as presented by Schneiberg and Soule (2005), which renders only certain types of responses as legitimate. Therefore, when presidents in the sample are naming what they prefer to engage with in terms of activism from students, they are setting the terms of engagement more so than students. Presidents are deciding what can be considered legitimate or not legitimate in terms of protesting (as seen by their expressed positive reactions to students who work through government, meetings, student affairs personal, etc.) and have agenda-setting authority and so they then invoke the legitimacy of what any student movement demands might

be proposing. Interview data shows the selection processes of these presidents as they pick who to talk to, what to respond to (even though they might not think so because in their minds they are compelled to respond to student social media posts in the middle of the night). The implication of this selection process is that students will have to mold their activism to fit what the president will listen to or, if they so choose, pursue alternate transgressive tactics (with varying levels of response or success).

Presidents expressed an appreciation for the role of student activism in furthering campus goals, student learning objectives, and a public good agenda in the form of civic engagement. However, interview data revealed a preference by presidents for students to utilize conventional political participation tactics (Dalton, 2008) and to assert their activism through established university channels. Conventional tactics expressed on campuses include committees, student government, student proposals, or feedback mechanisms on classes, practices or policies (Barnhardt, 2018). Presidents affirmed their preference of traditional or conventional political tactics in interviews, saying that they responded positively to requests made via student government, email outreach, student group representation, or scheduling a meeting with them. Presidents also legitimized a certain style of student interaction: those that were well-informed either by data or campus administrator support (e.g., student affairs staff) and are internally or locally formed or motivated (e.g., not directly using demands from a national group). Transgressive political process models or attention-getting tactics such as sit-ins in president's office, some sort of performative demonstration, or perhaps blocking traffic flow were often affronting to presidents, resulting in perceptions of student activists as immature or theatrical, rather than invested in a relevant issue. When transgressive tactics occur, as seen in this study, presidents expressed a tendency to delegitimize the actual "problem" as expressed by student

activists, and presidents are redirecting their attention (and perhaps public attention) to the "tactics", thereby distracting and detracting from the actual issues presented by the student activists. In summary, presidents in this study are stating that students can and should engage in activism on campus, but in certain legitimated and conventional process models, therefore, rendering certain pathways to change as legitimate and others as not.

This preference by presidents appears to be in tension with their consistent pronouncement of student movement support as well as the very definition of social movements, which is that movement participants work outside of established channels (Snow & Soule, 2010). The expressed preference for these traditional methods belies their interest in supporting student activism generally, as they have gotten themselves in the business of defining the terms by which students can organize, express dissent, make demands, and have their demands implemented. I would imagine that some presidents whose aims were to encourage student activism would be dismayed to see this occurring, likely even under their leadership. Why is this happening? Are college presidents so bound by their institutionalized roles that they are unable to conceptualize extra-institutional tactics or responses? Returning to Schneiberg and Soule (2005), institutionalized behaviors and power dynamics can limit leaders through normative ways of thinking or behavior that preference certain approaches or practices as legitimate. Presidents have internalized these institutional norms and in legitimizing certain forms of activism are reinforcing such norms. But as Barnhardt (2019) applies Schneiberg and Soule (2005) to student activism, she asserts that "activism often becomes a political alternative because the conventional political processes have underperformed for students" (p.9). If students are unable to resolve their grievances through traditional channels, then college administrators are undoubtedly pushing them towards activism tactics that they say they do not respond to and

therefore, do not find legitimate. In contrast, presidents who employ behaviors consistent with tempered radicals may find themselves as entering into more transformative leadership practices as they allow greater flexibility in student expression through legitimizing alternate tactics employed by student activists. In such cases, presidents could push against institutionalized norms that perhaps would diminish or deradicalize student demands that would otherwise make them more palatable for stakeholder but less effective.

This research contributes to literature on organizational insiders by showing how leaders can leverage their positional power to act as tempered radicals even within a constrained system. Zald and Berger (1978) did not study organizational leaders in their research on movements inside organizations. However, they understood that the response of authorities was influenced by the movement's goals, tactics, the constraints of the organization's leader, and the personal ideologies of the leader (Zald & Berger, 1978). Based upon this literature, I proposed college presidents should also be considered organizational insiders since they used, to varying degrees, the techniques of issue selling (Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Dutton et al., 2001), impression management (Goffman, 1959), and upward influence (Mowaday, 1978). Additionally, students are a unique group of organizational insiders, as higher education institutions commit to educational missions that encompass all students and campus life, including student activism. As seen in this study, presidents think about their responses to students in different ways than a corporate leader may think of organizational insiders that collectively organize.

Critics of college presidents conceive of the leadership role as upholding systemic racist power structures in academia and college presidents are, in fact, part of the system that upholds this power. Again, they can actively engage in efforts to push back against that system if they act in ways consistent with advocacy efforts via public forums (Barnhardt et al., 2018) or tempered

radicals (Meyerson & Scully, 1995). Campus leaders tasked with addressing and working to dismantle these structures—often Chief Diversity Officers—view themselves as working within the system to achieve change (Griffin et al., 2019); while they may not use the term, as tempered radicals. President responses show that a large percentage of the presidents interviewed also see themselves as someone who can navigate institutional and higher education systems effectively to implement positive changes in policies or practices. In this way, presidents have the potential to act as tempered radicals who can chip away at an inequitable higher education system from the inside. Whether or not they have the courage to do so is dependent upon the individual leader. Further, tempered radicals at all levels of the institution operate within the system, and therefore, have the "big picture" perspective of the institution and contexts in which they must operate. Students, while they are a different type of insider and may be correct as far as their demands, don't often possess the full view of the institution and can benefit from the recruitment of other insiders to their cause, especially those who are considered to have greater political power, residing at the "top" of the institution (Kezar, 2012).

While many presidents expressed support and advocacy for change on campus, much of that change was incremental, and sometimes, was not to the degree of change that satisfied student activists. This gap may best be described as the "tempered" part of tempered radicals, as presidents who still wished to keep their jobs were limited to operating within a somewhat constrained system. For example, in many instances, presidents said that they agreed with student activists on the majority of their demands but that external oppositional political stakeholders presented challenges to taking bold action on certain issues. In this way, presidents had to engage in their own forms of issue selling, impression management, and upward influence while working to get initiatives passed through any necessary political or governing channels. If

the objectives of student movements required some approval from state policymakers or the Board of Trustees, presidents needed to prioritize their asks of these stakeholders through issue selling and impression management. This means that perhaps a president had to push the board on some issues, but wait on others, depending upon the amount of political capital that had already been spent. For public university presidents in Republican-led states, this can be especially challenging. These presidents were less likely to have "supportive political elites" (McCarthy & Zald, 1987) to lean on as they engaged in upward influence to get their initiatives passed. Unfortunately, in these cases where the president's hands are tied, progress for student activists may suffer. For example, in a recent study on minoritized student activism on campus, students expressed frustration that despite promises of an inclusive campus, they felt that campus leadership upheld oppressive structures (Linder, Quaye, Stewart et al., 2020). Students in this study recognized the limits of the president's power when it came to work with the Board of Trustees, but the lack of progress in gaining policies supportive of minoritized students resulted in a campus climate that they found unwelcoming (Linder et al., 2020). Due to these potential limitations, presidents are indeed acting as tempered radicals within their organizations, and employing the tools of organizational insiders, as appropriate, to support student activists where their interests aligned.

Implications for Research

This research provides insights into a perspective and role that has often been excluded from student movement and organizational insider literature. However, there are still a number of unanswered questions, limitations, or potential avenues of further study that have been prompted by this research. In this section, I will offer what I deem to be implications for research that are a result of my findings, including areas of future study. I propose further research

addresses the need for: emerging research on institutional response and how it is tied (or not) to leadership responses, case studies that include student and president perceptions on the same student movement, further study on how activism (both by students and tempered radicals) can work to dismantle systemic racism from their insider statuses and creating meaningful scholarship around college and university leadership.

"Institutional" vs. "president" response. This research was based on literature that concluded presidents often acted as the "symbol" of their institution (Birnbaum, 1989) and I assumed that the president at the time of her tenure represented the institution. I also made the decision to study the president's decision-making process within the institutional and external contexts. It was my intention to make this research about the leader's responses within the system but not about the system itself. However, even though the president most often publicly represents the institution, he or she is not making decisions in a vacuum. They are employing their own personal biases and histories, approach to leadership, perceptions of students and activists, and their own perspective of what is best for the students and the campus. They are also making all of these calculations within a political system of constraints acting upon the institution, as demonstrated in Chapter Five, further complicating how one might identify where president and institutional preferences begin and end.

There is an emerging body of literature on institutional response that leads me to believe there is opportunity for further exploration of this topic, particularly to delineate where president and institutional responses may converge or diverge. Scholars acknowledge that there is some confusion regarding which group or person determines the response to student activism (Lockard et al., 2019), but Cho (2018) offers some direction in her proposal of the institutional response framework as a model for representing and understanding how institutions respond to student

demands. Her revisions to this model add a dimension to the framework which emphasizes the role institutionalized and systemic racism in higher education plays in determining institutional responses to student activism (Cho, 2020). Additionally, likely due to the lack of access to college presidents, rhetorical analysis has been employed by researchers (Cole & Harper, 2017; Cole, 2018) to understand the responses and rhetoric used by college presidents. Recent responses from presidents during the BLM summer 2020 movements have already been compiled by academics interested in studying institutional responses and levels of commitment (Ellis, 2020). This is currently an informal list, but researchers should pick up this work and connect their rhetorical analysis to campus practice, climate, and student activism. Further research in this area could explore the link between public institutional responses and institutional contexts, both historical and political. Further, public responses on the topic of BLM 2020 statements could be mapped back to other presidential statements or backgrounds. These responses could also be mapped back to institutional characteristics to understand trends in making public anti-racism statements or statements supportive of BLM 2020.

While I did not address their concerns in this research, Barnhardt and colleagues (2018) called for an examination of "how senior campus leaders target and implement internal campus communications" (p. 24). They also questioned the intentionality and motivation of public advocacy speech from college leaders, including the personal charisma and comfort level of the college president. We saw in this research that some college presidents employed internal communications strategies and professionals in their responses to student organizing, but several hired external public relations firms or contractors to address particularly public or otherwise challenging incidents. This tactic in the sample leads to two additional lines of questioning in this area. First, are campus priorities, climates, messaging and mission a consideration in these PR

responses? Are the aims of the president to seize upon the opportunity to further efforts of inclusion on campus or are they to simply assuage the onslaught of criticism in the moment so that campus life can return to "normal?" If the latter is the case, then perhaps campus leaders are prioritizing public relations and perceptions of a peaceful campus over those of campus inclusion or even free speech issues. Second, is this mode of public advocacy communication one that can be effective for tempered radicals? Odds are that this type of PR crisis management may not be supporting the work of a tempered radical. As mentioned previously, public statements crafted for an external, PR audience, during the summer of 2020 BLM activism did not engage in the underlying systemic and institutional inequities present on their campuses (Ellis, 2020). This may mean that further sophistication in communication in addition to a change in audience is required for tempered radicals in their positions to reach the level of public advocacy as proposed in Barnhardt et al. (2018). Further research could illuminate these shifting priorities by matching up presidential audiences, intentions and objectives in moments of crisis management with public statements and their stated goals on campus inclusion and diversity. Discrepancies between expressed priorities, messaging, and public statements could perhaps be revealed by such an undertaking.

Finally, students are now announcing their dissatisfaction with words rather than actions related to addressing issues of systemic racism in higher education. For this reason, future studies of institutions or presidents may need to study not just responses, but also follow through on issues discussed with students. Interview data provides some evidence that presidents are conscious of how they follow through with staff and students on each objective. Presidents who were particularly attuned to this issue shared with me the importance of reminding campus

stakeholders each year of what's been asked for, what's been done, and what progress is still remaining.

Case studies with presidential perspective. Studies of student activists conspicuously exclude campus administration and, especially, college presidents. And in this study, college presidents are interviewed exclusively, allowing them to craft the majority of the narrative of student activism response on their campuses (including archival analysis). Thus, to create rich understanding and interpretations of college leadership responses, there must be further case study research that includes the connection of president perceptions to student perceptions. The ideal comprehensive case study would follow student movements where the perceptions of student activists, student non-activists, faculty, staff, administrators, community members, and presidents are all studied. I would describe this approach as a 360-degree student movement case study analysis. This type of approach would help researchers to better understand how presidents intend responses to be received, how they are actually received, and what was effective and/or ineffective for each party in communicating with the others.

This type of research would be especially helpful for two main reasons. First, I heard anecdotally in many conversations that presidents were hungry for information on the topic of student activism on campus. Presidents faced movements that were difficult to navigate even in the best of times, and the advent of social media had further complicated their ability to be nimble and accurate in addressing student concerns. Second, based upon prior research and this study, there appears to be a mismatch between how students see presidents and how presidents see themselves in their responses to student movements. One study of student activism even proposed four different types of leaders (gatekeepers in the system, antagonists and enemies, supporters, or absentee leaders), and "the majority of student activists in our study experienced

their relationships with administrators, at least in part, as antagonistic" (Ropers-Huilman et al., 2005, p. 305). In another case study, students suggested that institutions had been "inappropriately nonresponsive" (Lockard et al., 2019, p. 197) and concluded that institutions had not taken the best steps to resolution. Based interview responses (which are from one perspective) there is more perspective and nuance than the previous narratives about how leadership interacts with students.

Tempered radicals and systemic racism. Prior research has shown that students recognize the role that campus staff and administrators play in publicly advocating on campus, including the role that senior campus leaders play in public advocacy (Barnhardt et al., 2015). Additionally, students recognize when campus values and public speech or advocacy (or lack thereof) are incongruent, which leaves them struggling to make sense of leadership decisions (Barnhardt et al., 2015). This perceived lack of public advocacy in the form of speech or behavior by campus leaders is perhaps one reason that students come to regard campus administrators and senior leadership a certain level of wariness at their potential responses. Presidents who center their resolution of these tensions around PR issues or protecting institutional interests (Cole & Harper, 2017) risk limiting their toolbox for addressing inevitable campus climate issues. Further research should explore to what extent are presidents emphasizing protection of institutional interests or their own personal/professional role compared to promoting diversity and inclusion efforts? When prioritization of diversity and inclusion efforts at colleges and universities falls short, the work then falls upon students and student activists. It could benefit both constituencies if research explored how much of these efforts could be addressed by presidents as tempered radicals versus students who may be considered not legitimate in the efforts.

This study does not directly address identity-based activism but did consider prior research in this area in background research. However, specific research on leadership in these areas must continue. Identity-based activism is inevitably present in political issues on and off campus. While this study focused on movements of any topic where demands were made of a specific campus, it is increasingly clear that political and identity-based activism are taking center stage. Recent scholarship on student activism (Linder et al, 2020; Lockard et al., 2019; Cho, 2020) in addition to presidential responses in this study confirm that there is a clear, ongoing series of challenges campuses face when addressing issues of systemic racism. There are opportunities for further research on how activism, both by students and tempered radicals, can work to dismantle systemic racism in higher education from their insider statuses. Students are tired of words (therefore, rhetorical analysis alone is insufficient) and are demanding that colleges and universities take action.

Embedded in an agenda of continued research on identity-based issues and issues of racism on campus are two emerging areas of concern. First, the increasing politicization of college boards and, consequently, potentially increased politicization of the presidential role. Presidents in this study reported challenges with lawmakers when seeking to update university policy to meet student demands in states with a conservative legislature or governor. In such contexts, external political entities heavily enacted their power over a specific campus. State and national politics in these cases seemed to overreach in their influence over public institutions, despite the best efforts of college presidents. And a recent *Chronicle of Higher Education* investigation provides evidence of increased politicization of college boards in the past decade, which may introduce additional barriers to student activists or presidents acting as tempered radicals. The *Chronicle* authors found that of the fifty flagship institutions, seventy percent of

board members received their position via an appointment and confirmation process that was controlled by a single political party (Ellis, Stripling & Bauman, 2020). In such cases, the complexity of the established structures and historically oppressive or racist systems may prove more challenging for students and campus leadership to upend. Issues of external meddling on campus are not likely to subside in the near future, and further conservative student activism that counters progressive student activism on campus is also likely. How presidents choose to respond to student activists applies not just to progressive activists but also conservative as presidents will be required to respond with consistency and adherence to policies often set forth by the legislature. In short, college presidents who face politicized environments but also seek to act as tempered radicals will have to successfully navigate these challenges to keep their jobs and improve their campuses.

The second area of concern related to identity-based activism and associated research is that with increased activism around issues of race in higher education, the responsibility of this activism work most often lands at the feet of students of color or student groups that have historically been marginalized due to their identities (Cho, 2020; Linder et al., 2020). This indicates that the responsibility and labor of addressing inequities on campus burdens those who are already negatively affected by campus indifference or inaction. Further, the study of this activism increases the load carried by these student activists. This may be inevitable; however, college leadership and researchers should explore how to pre-empt or mitigate this additional labor. In cases where it is unavoidable, approaches that properly recognize or compensate this labor should be implemented. However, this concern cannot be addressed until we better understand the measurable impacts of student labor as activism and student labor following activism (when students are enlisted). Additionally, how might leaders who are tempered

radicals model the optimal path for working with students while not potentially exploiting their efforts? The implications for leadership as a result of this research may point to different approaches to resolving student concerns so that labor is not distributed inequitably.

Scholarship on higher education leadership. This dissertation research made me realize that researchers of student movements or any related leadership topic must somehow find a better way to create meaningful scholarship on college and university leaders. The body of literature reviewed for this research consisted of a collection of studies on college presidents, including college president memoirs, reflection articles and op-eds. There was very little contemporary research on college presidents available. Due to the limitations mentioned, literature on college presidents is a small body of literature consisting of a few disjointed sources of information. The contemporary presidential data for this dissertation came from the American Council on Education (2017) report on college presidents, which, while applicable, was an isolated resource. Most presidential studies are confined to yearly surveys distributed by established groups—ACE, for example—who have established relationships and trust built with college presidents. For this reason, their networks are extremely guarded and studies outside of those sponsored by the organization are rare.

College presidents are a notoriously difficult to access group, which happens for a variety of reasons. First, presidents simply lack the excess time to communicate with interviewers or researchers. I had three presidents say that they simply did not have time to participate in my study or that as a policy (due to time constraints) they declined to participate in any studies. Interestingly, in my case, the presidents who said this were also female Women of Color, which leads me to speculate that leaders with similar identities have perhaps the greatest demands on their time. Additionally, college presidents are navigating political contexts as part of their

leadership roles and campus duties. This leads them to generally be less interested in commenting on the job when they may be at risk of saying "the wrong thing." Even for this study, about one quarter of participants asked to either check any quotes or not have direct quotes included in this paper, even though anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed. As mentioned earlier, this is perhaps why I received frank and direct answers from retired presidents, since they did not have much at risk in telling me potentially controversial points of view. Finally, contact information for initial outreach is an issue. While I was able to contact these presidents through a variety of my personal and professional networks, it still was not easy, and required dedication and time to follow up with each president and administrative assistant. Since many presidents also expressed interest in information from this study, it is evident that implications for practice based upon leadership research is important. However, in order to conduct such research, barriers to access much somehow be eased to increase scholarship output.

Contributions to the Field

My research and clinical graduate student work over the past five years has centered on translating scholarly research into practice for aspiring leaders in higher education with a focus on leading for diversity, equity and inclusion. At the New Leadership Academy at the National Forum, our philosophy is that issues of diversity, equity and inclusion are present in every leadership challenge or opportunity faced by staff, administrators and leaders in higher education. I brought this same interest to bear in my research on leadership and student activism. As a scholar, I am deeply interested in uncovering the contextual, situational, and leadership research questions related to how college presidents respond to student activism. As a practitioner, I am interested in how this research can be translated into action through sharing of best practices, leadership development programs, and institutional practices and policies. In

particular, I hope for the following three takeaways from a practitioner standpoint: 1) cultivate greater understanding of the issues undergirding student activism as it relates to systemic issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion and plan for action; 2) provide leaders with proven preventative tactics aimed at improving policies, relationships, and communications to address past and present student needs; and 3) provide leaders with a blueprint for anticipating and responding to student activism on campus if and when student movements escalate. Each of these takeaways can be used by new presidents, existing presidents looking to improve their approach to student movements, and retired presidents who engage in mentoring or aiding in leadership development of current or incoming presidents.

Cultivate Greater Understanding of Student Issues—and Act

Most of the presidents demonstrated a high level of understanding how the external and institutional contexts shaped their responses to the issues raised by students and the general approach to interpreting and responding to student activism itself. The bar has been raised in higher education for what students expect from their institutions, and presidents know it—whether or not they act upon this imperative on their own or at the continued urging of their students. The degrees to which presidents took on this responsibility varied, but most of them demonstrated an understanding of student issues in higher education today.

In their case study on the "I, Too Am" movement at a sample of institutions, Lockard and colleagues (2019) made recommendations to institutions and administrators to increase their understanding of student issues. First, they recommended that institutions must "reorient the structures of communication and governance…to allow students the opportunity to voice their concerns" (p. 196). This aligns with presidential tactics of staying in touch with student leaders and other students on campus. However, this recommendation takes it one step further by

recommending a restructuring of the lines of communication and governance. Several presidents in this dissertation shared that they hosted regular town halls, organized informal breakfast or lunch meetings, or held focus groups with students on campus. These types of practices encouraged participation by students who may not be involved in student groups or government, or campus activism, to voice their ideas about their institution. The second recommendation from Lockard et al. (2019) was to "cultivate support networks and spaces for students intentionally that will allow them to share their experiences and learn from one another" (p. 196). While this recommendation does not directly involve the president's participation, encouragement and facilitation of these types of dialogues and spaces signals to students that the institution supports and encourages their interactions. Finally, the understanding that students, and especially those from historically marginalized groups, require formalized lines of communication to voice their concerns as well as established support networks, can build the foundation for an improved campus environment and relationship with campus leadership.

Presidents who had the longest tenures reported that they were deeply engaged with students on their campuses, regardless of institution size. These were the presidents who employed preventative tactics and built relationships with students. Many of these presidents indicated feeling a level of responsibility to foster an equitable and progressive campus while also expressing that they were often amenable to student demands. These are the presidents who have the greatest potential to demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of issues affecting historically marginalized groups of students. With this greater understanding comes the responsibility of acting in the interests of students. As mentioned previously, BLM student activists across the nation in the summer of 2020 demanded *actions* from their presidents and not words alone. Presidents who have a successful track record of addressing student demands are

poised to act quickly in these areas on their campuses. They can follow up on the recommendations of drawn-out committee work, accelerate implementation of strategic diversity goals, and make the greatest efforts to seek the wisdom and feedback of student stakeholders in these areas.

Preventative Tactics

I had originally expected that college presidents played an important role in student movements because they served as the public voice and face of their institutions. However, I was surprised to learn that most college presidents—especially those at smaller colleges—were directly involved in working with student activists to reach a resolution to their demands. As pointed out by many presidents in the sample, one way to address potential issues is to build capacity in the organization through preventative measures. Presidents revealed in their interviews that they personally engaged in behaviors to encourage conventional tactics by students, what I have called here "preventative tactics."

Preventative tactics often fail to address the root cause of many deep-rooted student grievances, however, they are indicative of tempered radical behaviors and a desire by presidents to connect with students and maintain a campus president. Some of these tactics may even be considered "best practices" by long-tenured presidents in that they contribute to a positive campus culture, although they fall short of transformational. Other managerial best practices described by successful presidents included building strong executive teams prior to campus crises occurring. These presidents met regularly with their executive teams and planned time for team members to collaborate on issues with one another, building trust and capacity within the team to handle challenges. Presidents also engaged in preventative tactics that included building relationships with students, establishing and maintaining an on-campus presence, updating

policies that ensure student safety and reflect their needs, and establishing an ongoing communication plan.

One area of opportunity for transformational change arose when the majority of presidents acknowledged, without hesitation, that it was "one hundred percent" their responsibility to model and facilitate what they considered to be an inclusive campus environment. This willingness to take full accountability for campus inclusivity leads me to believe that there is untapped (at least to some extent) potential for tempered radical progress or even radical progress on realizing goals related to campus inclusivity. Ongoing evaluation and prioritization of an inclusive campus environment would help advance their support of students and also act to prevent future student movement disruption.

In addition to the preventative tactics shared by presidents, I would recommend that presidents add an additional tactic to their toolkit: publicize to students that presidents are accessible and approachable. Presidents in the study recognized that escalation happens for a multitude of reasons, and that in many cases, emotions on all sides are running high. More recently, social media has increased the pressure on leadership to respond quickly to demands. However, in contrast to previously reported student perceptions, college presidents interviewed over the course of this study from 2019-2020 were more likely to describe themselves as being accessible and willing to work with student activists, rather than taking an oppressive or adversarial role. While this may still occur within the confines of conventional tactics, the ability of students to communicate directly with campus leadership presents an opportunity to engage presidents in their cause. Perhaps continued engagement at such a personal level with campus presidents could prime them to respond to activism more readily with "join in" approaches to resolution.

Understand Free Speech on Campus

Issues related to free speech or contested speech were one of the most cited by presidents in this study. However, many presidents found that they worked through free speech issues as incidents arose, rather than planning ahead. Presidents did not call out one of the most challenging aspects of free speech on campus today: its inevitable "clash" college or university missions tied to goals of equity, diversity and inclusion (Sun & McClellan, 2020). To build resilience into institutions for their handling these conflicts, Sun and McClelland (2020) recommend engaging in planning and training of staff and administration before a contested situation arises. The recommendations include: 1) utilization of an educational framework alongside legal frameworks for evaluating programs, events or responses; 2) make proactive and inclusive adjustments to institutional statements, policies or principles around the First Amendment; 3) invest in professional development around campus climate and preparedness; 4) establish protocols and training on how to respond to protests or demonstrations on campus (as referenced by Fonteyn); 5) emphasize that leaders foster a culture of listening rather than reacting; 6) review institutional practices and policies with free speech and inclusion in mind and amend as appropriate; and 7) ensure individuals or teams tasked with bias response on campus are also well-versed in free speech policies (p. 82-84). These recommendations are further supported by findings of Barnhardt and colleagues (2018), who concluded that a campus climate benefits from administrative leaders who engage in frequent and consistent discussions of educational gains from diverse discourse. To encourage such discourse, campuses must also engage in practices that increase demographic composition across all facets of the institution (Barnhardt et al., 2018).

This may be easier said than done, as powerful normative, internal, and external forces act to constrain the messaging and responses preferred by presidents. Additionally, presidents must reconsider the audiences for their communications both prior to incidents of disruption and in response to movements or organizing that may be conventional or even reach the levels of campus disruption or even violence. Part of preparation must include strengthening campus priorities and efforts toward inclusivity. The majority of participants in this dissertation research agreed that college presidents are "one hundred percent" responsible for an inclusive campus environment. Yet the majority did not agree on how to cultivate such a campus climate nor were all of their perceptions of students or student activists consistent with the values encompassed in a campus that prioritizes inclusivity. There is clearly an opportunity for research on improvements toward creating and maintaining an inclusive campus environment.

Plan for Activism

Presidents expressed that they valued student activism on campus and attempted most often to support students rather than suppress or repress their efforts. If that is the case, presidents need to craft appropriate plans (or vet current plans) for student activism that enable and courage activism and free speech, protect the safety of students, allow for discourse on campus, and provide a path for communication and response, and document and evaluate the success of initiatives that are borne from student activist labor. Undoubtedly, it is easier for students and presidents if there are helpful and supportive policies in place to address: 1) systemic and recurring issues brought up by students (i.e. racial bias incidents, free speech, campus safety); 2) proper and safe approaches to student activism. However, this is not to advocate for restrictive policies like the ones put forth by conservative state legislatures to curb

free speech of students on campus by imposing sanctions on those who vocally and disruptively protest.

As leaders, college presidents are also responsible for setting priorities on campus. Scholars and professional associations in higher education have noted that "faculty and administrative leaders at institutions are rarely educated on how to respond to student mobilization and protest" (Lockard et al., 2019, p. 192). Some legal and student affairs organizations have responded by preparing guidelines, but as this study demonstrated, campus contexts are incredibly important to how responses are determined and communicated; therefore, such guides are limited in their useability. This weakness in training and resources is especially apparent on responses to incidents of racial bias or concerns about equity on campus. Consequently, leaders must themselves be reflective and prepared for responding to student movements on campus and must ensure that faculty, staff, and other administrators are adequately trained and prepared for such mobilization. This type of preparation would also be helpful as a preventative tactic in solving student issues prior to a failed response that then incites further escalation and disruption. Compared to campus responses in the 1960s and 1970s that may have posed a threat to campus safety, presidents said that they were "very concerned with student safety." This includes keeping students safe from violent outside instigators, being taken advantage of by outside organizers or faculty, or by ensuring that campus policies focus on student safety, as in the instances of campus policing or concealed weapons carried on campus. Some presidents even referred to campus protests—those that escalated to become disruptive or even violent—as a "crisis" on campus. As such, some of these presidents had formed crisis response teams or identified a response plan to guide their decisions, should the time come. In light of the likelihood of future student activism and the potential threats to campus safety,

professional associations should promote and presidents should adopt many if not all of these preparation recommendations.

Leadership Development

Finally, none of these contributions to the field are helpful if they are not incorporated into new and existing leadership development publications, seminars, or programs. Leaders and administrators at all levels of an institution benefit from the knowledge and experience shared by college presidents in this study, whether or not they have the final word in resolutions with student activists. Institutional and external constraints experienced by presidents can inform student affairs professionals and administrators in how to research the feasibility of meeting each student demand. They can also better understand the nuance associated with certain campus issues and perhaps become more politically-savvy in meeting student demands in conservative states. Consequently, they can support and encourage student activism when more disruptive tactics are beneficial to meeting student movement goals. These key administrators and staff can evaluate their institutional contexts and, as applicable, encourage building relationships with the president or appealing to the president most effectively with their demands.

Presidents who continue to grow as leaders or tempered radicals will benefit from applying these findings to their own approach. Leaders expressed a deep commitment to students due to their unique stakeholder roles as organizational insiders but also as the consumers of higher education and engaged citizens of the United States. Presidents further described an altruistic desire to foster continual improvement on campus and, consequently, within society for the benefit of the public good. Presidents valued the legacy of the institution as either a prestigious, community-based, or equitable campus, and sought solutions that were congruent with this belief. Finally, presidents considered their own legacies as leaders, most often wanting

to preserve a legacy that demonstrated a commitment to their students and institutions. These values and commitments can only be nurtured through a dedication to continued leadership development and growth, based upon relevant and timely research in these areas. As such, findings of this and other studies should be incorporated into leadership development programming at every level of the higher education system and institutions.

Conclusion

From the earliest of our colonial colleges and throughout the many different eras in which higher education has held its special place in our society, college presidents have been expected to serve as both managers and guardians, mirrors and beacons. Even now, when leaders and leadership in other areas of American life seem to invite cynicism, college presidents are accountable to act in ways consistent with the prestigious and powerful natures of their roles while responding to and upholding the tenets valued within a free and democratic society. Participants in this study shared with me that they acted within the responsibility placed on them as institutional leaders, conditioned by their awareness of what other college and university presidents might have done in the past, and conscious they were acting as visible societal models. In assuming these multiple public faces, leaders in private institutions were influenced as much as those in public institutions or in state systems. Whatever the catalyzing issues, the presidents in this study reported that they followed a path which responded to students in ways consistent with their institution's mission, but more importantly, guided by their awareness of the broad commitment and mission of higher education in this country. Through their responses to student activism on campus, presidents expressed a desire to model the values of a unique organizational culture, one that plays an important role in civic engagement and ultimately in shaping our democracy.

Presidents occupy an important public role, one that signifies to students, stakeholders, and society the very nature of leadership within democratic institutions. In this study I premised the role of students and student movements as influences that required a response from college presidents. The insights offered by the participating presidents make it clear how the confluence of roles that they hold both influence and complicate the challenge of their overarching commitment: We hold college presidents to be responsive to students in a responsible way.

While this research did not examine the perspectives of students, administrators or faculty following the response from a president, the presidents themselves reflected upon their responses as opportunities to educate students and exemplify how inequities, communication, dissent, and protest are to be regarded and adjudicated (or at least managed) in a free society. Even though their preferences for conventional student tactics revealed a bias towards the observance of norms, a bias which operates within the system as well as within presidents, it does not render the meaning of such preferences inconsequential. Rather it confirms that the considerations of student activists and college presidents, when they act in mutual good faith, must include an acknowledgment of the inherent normative functions of the system of higher education and those who occupy roles within it.

Presidents in the sample observed that this research, once completed, could provide helpful guidance to them, to other college presidents, and to executive teams. The challenges presidents face in responding to student activists are representative of a multitude of pressures that test the roles, responsibilities, boundaries, and ethical commitments of institutions of higher education. The presidents I interviewed had not yet had to face the difficult circumstances of a pandemic, forced to resolve threats to institutional survival while seeing to the academic success of students, fully reconcile institutionalized racism with past (and often inadequate) institutional

responses, or maintain a spirit of freedoms and voluntary compliance while keeping the campus and its surrounding community healthy. This only demonstrates that the precise circumstances which bring students and presidents together to resolve issues will frequently change, and that the rigorous examination of the processes at work in that relationship will always be timely.

As I conclude this study leaders are being asked to enact their symbolic and organizational roles in new ways and to reach creative solutions to difficult problems while simply hoping to keep their jobs. It does not require a pandemic to make that point clearly. In Republican-led states, where presidents commented that political constraints are felt to the greatest extent, legislatures are currently contemplating further restriction of college and university presidents who will then be directed by state law to observe strict neutrality in matters of public debate. As mentioned previously, the shifting politicization of governing boards offers yet another challenge to the leadership role. If restrictive policies and practices become further institutionalized, perhaps even replicated across the system through a process of isomorphism, then what becomes of the ethical obligations of college presidents? And what can this research offer in terms of a response to such challenges?

In response, I propose that leaders can and should be guided by their personal values, leadership philosophy, and ethics in their decisions. External constraints, even political ones, are important but are not the only considerations, and any individual who assumes the significant responsibility of a college presidency must expect and be prepared to skillfully navigate such political pressures; however, the responsibilities to the mission of their institutions and higher education must outweigh political pressure. Higher education institutions in the United States were not intended to act as neutral, apolitical entities in our society. Rather, they should serve the public good, and they do so best when they provide a space to explore ideas, focus meaningful

inquiry, function as a resource, provide a critical voice, express dissent—and with patience, grace and integrity, struggle toward agreement in our society.

Appendix A: Email Requesting Participation

Good afternoon,

My name is Amy Fulton and I am a doctoral candidate at the Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education (CSHPE) based at the University of Michigan. I am writing to follow up on the recommendation of _____who suggested you could make a valuable contribution to a study of decision-making processes undertaken by college and university presidents of four-year institutions that shape responses to student activism on the nation's campuses. It is my hope that research findings from this study, conducted as part of my doctoral dissertation, can promote effective practice in two complementary ways. Findings will support senior campus leaders in making informed decisions regarding their interactions with student activists and will offer student activists a greater understanding of how to form effective collaborative relationships with campus leaders.

Participation will require a single one-on-one interview which will last approximately half an hour. I understand that college presidents have very limited time each day, and I have field tested the interview protocol to optimize your time. I appreciate any time you can share with me to discuss this topic.

The interview can occur via phone or web conference, subject to your availability. For data analysis purposes, the interview will be recorded and transcribed. Depending upon participant preference, responses can be kept confidential and, if requested, data reporting can obfuscate participant identity through changing of names, demographic information, and event specifics for the particular student movements on your campus. The University of Michigan Health Sciences and Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board has determined that this research is exempt from IRB oversight, but you can be assured that every protection available will be extended on behalf of participants.

I appreciate your time and your consideration of participation in this research. If you would share this information with your administrative representative, I will follow with a telephone contact to determine your interest and availability. If you do choose to participate, I will send further information regarding the study and will work with your representative to establish time for the interview. My email is apfulton@umich.edu or mobile (xxx) xxx-xxxx.

Best,
Amy

Amy Fulton

Senior Doctoral Student Researcher
National Forum of Higher Education for the Public Good
University of Michigan

Doctoral Candidate
Center for the Study on Higher and Postsecondary Education
School of Education, University of Michigan

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Give a short introduction and summary of project. Reminder of confidentiality of interview results, including de-identifying the president, institution, and other pertinent information.

1. How would you describe the students of [institution name]?

2. What is your proudest accomplishment in your time at [institution name]?

3. Campuses have been facing a lot of pressure from students in the past several years, please walk me through how you respond to collective student concerns?

4. How would you say you are doing in your handling of campus protests compared to other campuses?
    a. Probe: How do you think your response to student activism is viewed by other leaders?
    b. Probe: Is there anyone who you think is doing a particularly good job responding to student activism on campus?
    c. Probe: What examples of presidential responses do you try to avoid becoming?

5. What would you say is the responsibility or role of a president when student movements on campus arise?

6. How have your experiences as a student or faculty member influenced your approach to working with student activists?

7. [You mentioned that] you recently experienced [insert movements here]. How did you initially react to what the students were asking for in each of these examples?
    a. Note: Try to get them to compare and contrast two student movements they've experienced.
    b. Probe: Student activists use a variety of approaches and strategies—also referred to as "tactics"—to bring attention their message, what kind of tactics were used in each of these instances?
    c. Probe: How did the tactics influence your response?

8. How have you felt constrained either by people or policies in finding a resolution in these situations?
    a. Probe: What strategies have you used to mitigate those constraints?

9. How did you determine how long to wait before responding to student activists?

a. Probe: Where did your information about the student activists come from?
b. Probe: Did you respond personally or delegate the response?
c. Probe: How did you determine which medium/platforms to use when responding?

10. I realize that presidents are unable to attend to all aspects of college functions, and so they often turn to administrative staff for recommendations. What process do you or your executive team go through to delegate responses to student activist demands on campus?
    a. Probe: How do you built trust with your executive team so that you feel comfortable delegating in these types of situations?
    b. Probe: What policies or plans do you have in place for when student protests arise?

11. If a group of student activists are sitting in your office to talk about their platform (or maybe this actually happened), how do you approach this conversation?
    a. Probe: What do you think students want from you?
    b. Probe: What do you think is most often the best outcome?
    c. Probe: Why would [outcome] be the best?

12. To what degree is the president responsible for fostering an inclusive campus environment?
    a. Probe: If not, why?
    b. Probe: If yes, how do you try to go about doing this?

13. Finally, we both know that further student activism is inevitable. How have you prepared your campus to respond to students when the next issue arises?
    a. Probe: When you were a new president or new to this position, how were you prepared to respond to student activism?

14. How is student activism or protest handled on your campus compared to a crisis (e.g. natural disaster, direct threat to safety of students)?

15. How has student activism on your campus changed in the past five years?
    a. Probe: What do you feel brought about these changes?
    b. Probe: How do you think student activism has changed overall?

Thank you so much for your time, I know you are very busy. My hope is that this research can help prepare future university leaders to respond constructively to student activists and conversely, to help student activists work with leaders to effect change on their campuses.

Appendix C: Amended Interview Protocol

Give a short introduction and summary of project. Reminder of confidentiality of interview results, including de-identifying the president, institution, and other pertinent information.

1. How would you describe the students of [institution name]?

2. What is your proudest accomplishment in your time at [institution name]?

3. Campuses have been facing a lot of pressure from students in the past several years, please walk me through how you respond to collective student concerns?

4. ~~How would you say you are doing in your handling of campus protests compared to other campuses?~~
    a. ~~Probe: How do you think your response to student activism is viewed by other leaders?~~
    b. ~~Probe: Is there anyone who you think is doing a particularly good job responding to student activism on campus?~~
    c. ~~Probe: What examples of presidential responses do you try to avoid becoming?~~

5. What would you say is the responsibility or role of a president when student movements on campus arise?

6. How have your experiences as a student or faculty member influenced your approach to working with student activists?

7. [You mentioned that] you recently experienced [insert movements here]. How did you initially react to what the students were asking for in each of these examples?
    a. Note: Try to get them to compare and contrast two student movements they've experienced.
    b. Probe: Student activists use a variety of approaches and strategies—also referred to as "tactics"—to bring attention their message, what kind of tactics were used in each of these instances?
    c. Probe: How did the tactics influence your response?

8. How have you felt constrained either by people or policies in finding a resolution in these situations?
    a. ~~Probe: What strategies have you used to mitigate those constraints?~~

9. How did you determine how long to wait before responding to student activists?

a. ~~Probe: Where did your information about the student activists come from?~~
b. Probe: Did you respond personally or delegate the response?
c. Probe: How did you determine which medium/platforms to use when responding?

10. I realize that presidents are unable to attend to all aspects of college functions, and so they often turn to administrative staff for recommendations. What process do you or your executive team go through to delegate responses to student activist demands on campus?
    c. Probe: How do you built trust with your executive team so that you feel comfortable delegating in these types of situations?
    d. Probe: What policies or plans do you have in place for when student protests arise?

11. If a group of student activists are sitting in your office to talk about their platform (or maybe this actually happened), how do you approach this conversation?
    ~~a. Probe: What do you think students want from you?~~
    ~~b. Probe: What do you think is most often the best outcome?~~
    ~~c. Probe: Why would [outcome] be the best?~~

12. To what degree is the president responsible for fostering an inclusive campus environment?
    a. Probe: If not, why?
    b. Probe: If yes, how do you try to go about doing this?

13. Finally, we both know that further student activism is inevitable. How have you prepared your campus to respond to students when the next issue arises?
    a. Probe: When you were a new president or new to this position, how were you prepared to respond to student activism?

~~14. How is student activism or protest handled on your campus compared to a crisis (e.g. natural disaster, direct threat to safety of students)?~~

15. How has student activism on your campus changed in the past five years?
    a. Probe: What do you feel brought about these changes?
    b. Probe: How do you think student activism has changed overall?

Thank you so much for your time, I know you are very busy. My hope is that this research can help prepare future university leaders to respond constructively to student activists and conversely, to help student activists work with leaders to effect change on their campuses.

Appendix D: Codebook

Id	Title	Description
1	Changes_inst accountability	President believes recent changes on campus have occurred related to students holding the institution more accountable
2	Changes_student expectations	President believes recent changes on campus have occurred related to students having higher expectations for their institution
3	Ext influence_community	External influence of surrounding community on the campus.
4	Ext influence_political	Describes external influence such as community politics, governors, or other political figures that are taken into consideration by presidents in working with student activists.
5	Inclusive_partnership	Presidents view inclusiveness as a partnership with students.
6	Inclusive_president	President believes they play a key role in creating an inclusive campus.
7	Inclusive_responsiveness	Inclusivity requires responsiveness to minority groups on campus.
8	Inclusive_transparency	Transparent about efforts towards inclusiveness.
9	Institutional context_academic	Describes contexts related to academic functions at the institution
10	Institutional context_constraints	Describes constraints related to the institution type or culture
11	Institutional context_governance	Descriptions of governance structures including Board of Trustees, Regents, or religious affiliations.
12	Institutional context_other	Institutional contexts that are beyond public vs. private, including religious, MSI, or HBCU.
13	Institutional context_political	Includes local or state community politics that may influence the insitution. For example, state legislature or governors or in the case of HBCUs, US Senators.
14	Institutional context_prestige	Description of institution's prestige or ranking of some type
15	Institutional context_private	Private school
16	Institutional context_public	Public school
17	Institutional context_religious	Religious, private school
18	Institutional context_small	Size of the institution is small, under 3,000 students total
19	Lammers_buy off	President engages in negotiation with the student protestors including positive sanctions or concessions.
20	Lammers_fight off	President attempts to apply negative sanctions, disciplinary action, or repression to student activists.
21	Lammers_join in	Presidents engage in cooperation or sharing power with the activists.
22	Lammers_stand off	President attempts to wait out or wear out protestors.

23	Movement_academic	Student movement example is academic in nature.
24	Movement_divestment	Student movement is related to divestment efforts. Could include anti-apartheid, fossil fuels, or Israel examples.
25	Movement_Israel	Examples of Palestinian students or other students protesting against Israel on campus.
26	Movement_lgbtq	Type of movement is based in lgbtq issues.
27	Movement_other	Movement examples of any other nature than included in codes.
28	Movement_racial bias	Type of movemetn is grounded in racial bias on campus.
29	Movement_safety	Movement example involves issues of campus safety. Could include policing, guns on campus, or other safety issues.
30	Movement_social media	Movement examples where social media is used by students or presidents in responding
31	Movement_speech	Movement is related to free speech issues
32	Perception_adversarial	Presidents perceive that student activists are adversarial
33	Perception_benefits campus	President perceives that the work of student activists can benefit the entire campus.
34	Perception_immaturity	Presidents express the sentiment that they view college activists as immature and lacking knowledge of higher education that may otherwise discourage them from engaging in activism on campus.
35	Perception_leadership	Presidents perceive that engaging in activism on campus helps students to develop leadership skills.
36	Perception_learning	College president perceives student movements as a learning opportunity.
37	President_accomplishment	President's description of their accomplishment they are most proud of
38	President_build trust	Preident describes how they build trust with executive team
39	President_observed changes	Changes in student movements observed by the president in past five years
40	Prevention_communication exec team	Regular communication with the executive team prevents student activism on campus.
41	Prevention_policies	Policies are in place that prevent student activism from becoming necessary.
42	Prevention_student leadership	Presidents believe that the best way to prevent student movements is through engaging with student leadership (ex. student gov't) on a regular basis.
43	Prior experience_activism	Prior experience by a president as a student or staff/faculty member engaged in activism.
44	Prior experience_admin	Prior experience as an administrator or president at another institution influences how they interact with student activists.
45	Prior experience_faculty	Prior experience as a faculty member influences how they interact with student activists.
46	Response_clarify misinformation	Instances where students or community members are sharing misinformation either in media or social media that must be clarified and a response shared.
47	Response_counter	Instances where the president counters student demands
48	Response_delegate	Presidential response to delegate to other campus leadership.
49	Response_internal comm	Presidential response is to communicate internally.
50	Response_public	Response is public action or comment.

51	Response_student meeting	Initial response is to meet with students.
52	Response_timing	Related to timing of president's response to student movement
53	Response_town hall	President responds by calling a town hall to discuss movement and/or demands
54	Students_angry	President describes student activists as angry
55	Students_commuter	Students on campus are described as commuters and are therefore less engaged.
56	Students_diverse	President describes general student population as diverse
57	Students_engaged	Students on campus are described as being engaged on campus. Either through clubs, activism, student government, or academic involvement opportunities.
58	Students_entitled	Students are described (often negativel) as entitled rather than contributing to the campus or local community.
59	Students_PELL	President describes student population as high in PELL-eligible students
60	Students_residential	President describes student population as mostly residential
61	Students_rural	President describes student population as mostly rural
62	Students_thoughtful	Students on campus are described as (in an often positive way) thoughtful about campus culture and their surrounding world.
63	Students_urban	President describes student population as mostly urban
64	Students_white	President describes student population as mostly white
65	Students_working	President describes student population as mostly working
66	Tactics_effective	Student movement tactics described by presidents as being effective.
67	Tactics_ineffective	Student movement tactics described by presidents as being ineffective.
68	TR_impression management	Example of when others used impression management on a president or the president used it with Board members or political leaders. Impression management originated in social psychology and describes behaviors that individuals employ to control impressions or images formed of them by others (Goffman, 1959)
69	TR_issue selling	President describes someone using issue selling to bring a topic to their attention, or using issue selling themselves. Issue selling is the approach used by non-executive managers to define organizational issues for leadership through “a mechanism that prompts top management to attend to issues that they might not otherwise attend to” (Dutton & Ashford, 1993, p. 401).
70	TR_self identify	The president self-identifies as a tempered radical.
71	TR_upward influence admin	Evidence of administrators or executive cabinet using upward influence to recruit presidents to their cause.
72	TR_upward influence student	Evidence of students using upward influence to recruit presidents to their cause.

Bibliography

Altbach, P. G. (1989). Activism perspectives on student political activism. *Comparative Education*, *25*(1), 97–110.

American Council on Education (2018, April 10). ACE survey finds college presidents striving to balance free speech with inclusive practices. Retrieved from: https://www.acenet.edu/News-Room/Pages/ACE-Survey-Finds-College-Presidents-Striving-to-Balance-Free-Speech-With-Inclusive-Practices.aspx.

Arthur, M.M.L. (2011). *Student activism and curricular change in higher education*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Astin, A., Astin, H., Bayer, A., & Bisconti, A. (1975). *The power of protest*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Barnhardt, C.L. (2014). Campus-based organizing: Tactical repertoires of contemporary student movements. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 167, 43-58.

Barnhardt, C. L. (2015). Campus Educational Contexts and Civic Participation: Organizational Links to Collective Action. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *86*(1), 38–70.

Barnhardt, C.L. (2019). The promise and struggles of campus-based student activism. In P. A. Sasso & J. L. DeVitis. *Student activism in the academy: Its struggle and promise*. Stylus Publishing, LLC.

Barnhardt, C.L., Mollett, A., Phillips, C.W., Young, R.L., & Sheets, J.E. (2018). University leaders' public advocacy: An educational asset in creating inclusive climates. *Teachers College Record*, 120(8), 1-34.

Barnhardt, C.L., Reyes, K., Rodriguez, A.V., & Ramos, M. (2016). A transformative mixed methods assessment of educational access and opportunity for undocumented colelge students in the southeastern United States. *Journal of Mixed Methods*, 12(4), 413-436.

Barnhardt, C.L., Sheets, J.E., & Pasquesi, K. (2014). You expect *what*? Students' perceptions as resourcesin acquiring commitments and capacities for civic engagement. *Research in Higher Education*, 56(6), 622-644.

Bastedo, M.N., & Bowman, N. A. (2010). U.S. News and World Report college rankings: Modeling institutional effects on organizational reputation. *American Journal of Education*, 116(2), 163-183.

Bauer-Wolf, J. (2019, March 6). Even more white supremacist fliers. *Inside Higher Ed*. Retrieved from: https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/03/06/analysis-finds-increase-white-supremacist-propaganda-college-campuses.

Bayer, A.E. & Astin, A. W. (1969). Campus Disruption during 1968-1969, Special report by the American Council on Education.

Binder, A. & Wood, K. (2013). *Becoming right: How campuses shape young conservatives*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Birnbaum, R. (1988). *How colleges work: The cybernetics of academic organization and leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Birnbaum, R. (1992). *How academic leadership works*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Birnbaum, R., Bensimon, E., Neumann, A. (1989). Making sense of administrative leadership (ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 1). *Washington DC: Association for the Study of Higher Education*.

Boren, M. E. (2001). *Student resistance: A history of the unruly subject.* London, Great Britain.

Bourgeois, L., & Eisenhardt, K.M. (1988). Strategic decision processes in high velocity environments. *Management Science*, 34(7), 816-835.

Briscoe, F., & Safford, S. (2005). The Nixon-in-China Effect: Activism, Imitation, and the Institutionalization of Contentious Practices. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *53*(3), 460–491.

Broadhurst, C.J. (2014). Campus activism in the 21st century: A historical framing. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 167, 3-15.

Broadhurst, C. J. & Velez, A. L. (2019). Historical and contemporary contexts of student activism in U.S. higher education. In. D. L. Morgan & C. H. F. Davis III, *Student activism, politics, and campus climate in higher education* (pp. 3-20). New York, NY: Routledge.

Cho, K. S. (2018). The perception of progress: Conceptualizing institutional response to student protests and activism. *Thought and action*, Summer 2018: 81-95.

Cho, K. S. (2020). *Responding to campus racism: Analyzing student activism and institutional respons*es. [Doctoral dissertation, University of California Los Angeles]. Retrieved from: https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7j10b4kn.

Cohen, M. D., & March, J.G. (1986) *Leadership and ambiguity: The American college president*. 2nd edition, Boston: Harvard Business School Press, pp. 195-229.

Cohen, R., & Zelnick, R. E. (2002). *The free speech movement: Reflections on Berkeley in the 1960s*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Cole, E. R. (2018). College presidents and black student protests: A historical perspective on the

image of racial inclusion and the reality of exclusion. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 93(1), 78-89.

Cole, E. R., & Harper, S. R. (2017). Race and rhetoric: An analysis of college presidents' statements on campus racial incidents. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 10(4), 318-333.

Coley, J. S. (2018). *Gay on God's campus: Mobilizing for LGBT equality at Christian colleges and universities*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina press.

Dart, T. (2016). Cocks not glocks: Texas student carry dildos on campus to protest gun laws. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from: https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/aug/25/cocks-not-glocks-texas-campus-carry-gun-law-protest

Davis, C. H. F. III (2019). Student activism, resource mobilization, and new tactical repertoires in the 'digital age.' In. D. L. Morgan & C. H. F. Davis III, *Student activism, politics, and campus climate in higher education* (pp. 3-20). New York, NY: Routledge.

Davis, G. F., Morrill, C., & Soule, S. A. (2008). Introduction : Social Movements in Organizations and Markets. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *53*(3), 389–394.

DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (1983). The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review*, 48, 147-160.

Dixon, M., Tope, D., & Van Dyke, N. (2008). "The university works because we do": On the determinants of campus labor organizing in the 1990s. *Sociological Perspectives*, *51*(2).

Duderstadt, J.J. (2007). *The view from the helm: Leading the American university during an era of change*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Dutton, J.E. & Ashford, S.J. (1993). Selling issues to top management. *Academy of Management*

Review, 18(3), 397-428.

Dutton, J.E., Ashford, S.J., O'Neill, R.M., & Lawrence, K.A. (2001). Moves that matter: Issue selling and organizational change. *The Academy of Management Journal*, 44(4), 716-736.

Dweck, C.S. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. New York City, NY: Ballentine Books.

Eisenhardt, K.M. (1989). Building theories from case study research. *The Academy of Management Review*, 14(4), 532-550.

Ellis, L. (August 19, 2020). Anatomy of a demand. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Retrieved September 24, 202020 from: https://www-chronicle-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/article/anatomy-of-a-demand.

Ellis, L. (June 12, 2020). For colleges, protests over racism may put everything on the line. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved September 22, 2020, from: https://www-chronicle-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/article/for-colleges-protests-over-racism-may-put-everything-on-the-line

Featherstone, L. (2002). *Students against sweatshops.* New York City, NY: Verso.

Flowers, J.C. (June 10, 2020). The coming campus protests. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Retrieved September 24, 2020 from https://www-chronicle-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/article/the-coming-campus-protests.

Frickel, S., & Gross, N. (2005). A general theory of scientific and intellectual movements. *American Sociological Review*, 70, 204-232.

Friedman, M. (1985). Consumer boycotts in the United States, 1970-1980: Contemporary events in historical perspective. *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 19, 96-117.

Gamson, W. A. (1968). *Power and disconten*t. Homewood, IL: Dorsey.

Gamson, W. A. (1975). *The strategy of social protest.* Homewood, Ill.: Dorsey Press.

Gibson, J. L. (1989). The policy consequences of political intolerance: Political repression during the Vietnam War era. *The Journal of Politics*, 51(1), 13-35.

Gibson, J. L. (2008) Intolerance and political repression in the United States: A half century after McCarthyism. *American Journal of Political Science*, 52(1), 96-108.

Glaser, B.G., & Strauss, A.L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory*. Aldine: Chicago Press.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York: The Overlook Press.

Greenleaf, R.K. (1977). *Servant leadership: A journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness.* New York: Paulist Press.

Griffin, K.A., Hart, J.L., Worthington, R.L., Belay, K., & Yeung, J.G. (2019). Race-related activism: How do higher education diversity professionals respond? *The Review of Higher Education*, 43(2), 667-696.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. *Handbook of qualitative research*, *2*(163-194), 105.

Hamrick, F.A. (1998). Democratic citizenship and student activism. *Journal of College Student Development*, 39(5), 449-459.

Hauser C. (2017, March 20). Colleges grapple with balancing free speech and security after protests. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/29/us/texas-aandm-speaking-policy-richard-spencer.html

Higher Education Research Institute (2016, February 10). College students' commitment to activism, political and civic engagement reach all-time highs. Retrieved from:

https://newsroom.ucla.edu/releases/college-students-commitment-to-activism-political-and-civic-engagement-reach-all-time-highs.

Hodgkinson, H. (1970). Student protest--an institutional and national profile. *The Record,* 71:537-578.

Hoffman, G.D., & Mitchell, T.D. (2016). Making diversity "everyone's business": A discourse analysis of institutional responses to student activism for equity and inclusion. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 9(3), 277-289.

Howard, E., & Gagliardi, J. (2018). *Leading the way to parity: Preparation, persistence, and the role of women presidents*. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education.

Jaschik, S. (2017, February 7). White supremacist fliers, email on campuses. *Inside Higher Ed*. Retrieved from: https://www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2017/02/07/white-supremacist-fliers-email-campuses.

Jenkins, J. C. (1983). Resource mobilization theory and the study of social movements. Annual *Review of Sociology*, 9(1), 527-553.

Jenkins, J. C., & Eckert, C. M. (1986). Channeling Black insurgency: Elite patronage and professional social movement organizations in the development of the Black movement. *American Sociological Review*, 51(6), 812-829.

Kelderman, E. (2015, November 10). Upheaval in Missouri highlights football players' power. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from: http://www.chronicle.com/article/Upheaval-in-Missouri/234130.

Kerr, C. (2003). *The gold and the blue: A personal memoir of the University of California, 1949-1967, political turmoil.* Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

Kezar, A. (2010). Faculty and staff partnering with student activists: Unexplored terrains of

interaction and development. *Journal of College Student Development*, 51(5), 451-480.

Kezar, A. (2012). Bottom-up/top-down leadership: Contradiction or hidden phenomenon. The *Journal of Higher Education*, 83(5), 725-760.

Kezar, A., & Eckel, P.D. (2004). Meeting today's governance challenges: A synthesis of the literature and examination of a future agenda for scholarship. *The Journal of Higher Education*, (75(4), 371-399.

Kezar, A., Fries-Britt, S., Kurban, E., McGuire, D., & Wheaton, M.K. (2018). *Speaking truth and acting with integrity: Confronting challenges of campus racial climate*. American Council on Education.

Kezar, A., Gallant, T. B., & Lester, J. (2011). Everyday people making a difference on college campuses: The tempered grassroots leadership tactics of faculty and staff. *Studies in Higher Education*, 36(2), 129-151.

King, B.G. (2008). A political mediation model of corporate response to social movement activism. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 53, 395-421.

King, B.G. & Soule, S.A. (2007). Social movements as extra-institutional entrepreneurs: The effect of protest on stock price returns. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 52, 413-442.

Koriat, A. (1993). How do we know that we know? The accessibility model of the feeling of knowing. *Psychological Review*, 100(4):609-39.

Kvale, S. (1992). Introduction. In S. Kvale (Ed.), *Psychology and postmodernism* (pp. 1-16), Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Lammers, C.J. (1977). Tactics and strategies adopted by university authorities to counter student opposition. In J. D. Light, & J. Spiegel, *The dynamics of university protest.* Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hall, Inc.

Levin, M., & Spiegel, J. (1977). Point and counterpoint in the literature on student unrest. In D. &. Light, *The Dynamics of University Protest.* Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hall, Inc.

Linder, C., Quaye, S. J., Lange, A. C., Evans, M. E., & Stewart, T. J. (2020). *Identity-based student activism: Power and oppression on college campuses*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Light, J. D. (1977). The dynamics of faculty response to student protest. In J. D. Light, & J. Spiegel, *The dynamics of university protest.* Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hall, Inc.

Light, R.J., Singer, J., & Willett, J. (1990). *By design: Conducting research on higher education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Lincoln, Y.S., & Guba, E.G. (2013). *The constructivist credo*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, Inc.

Lipset, S. M. (1971). *Rebellion in the University.* New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Long, D. (1970). Institutional responses. In J. Forster & D. Long (Eds.), *Protest! Student activists*, 554-581. New York: Macmillan Morrow Press.

Lounsbury, M. (2001). Institutional Sources of Practice Variation: Staffing College and University Recycling Programs. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *46*(1), 29.

McAdam, D. (1986). Recruitment to high-risk activism: The case of Freedom Summer. *American Journal of Sociology*, 92(1), 64-90.

McAdam, D. (1982). *Political process and the development of black insurgency 1930-1970*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

McAdam, D. & Scott, W.R. (2005). Organizations and movements. In G.F. Davis, D. McAdam, W.R. Scott, & M.N. Zald, *Social Movements and Organization Theory* (pp. 4-40). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

McAdam, D., Tarrow, S., & Tilly, C. (2001). *The Dynamics of Contention*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

McCarthy, J.D., & Zald, M.N. (1977). Resource mobilization and social movements. In M.N. Zald & J.D. McCarthy (Eds.), *Social movements in an organizational society* (pp. 15-47). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books.

McDonnell, M.-H., & Werner, T. (2016). Blacklisted Businesses Social Activists' Challenges and the Disruption of Corporate Political Activity. *Administrative Science Quarterly*.

McLean, D. (June 16, 2020). As protests raged, these colleges wrote strong words. But will they act? *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved September 22, 2020, from: https://www-chronicle-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/article/as-protests-raged-these-colleges-wrote-strong-words-but-will-they-act.

McLendon, M.K., & Hearn, J.C. (2006). Mandated Openness in Public Higher Education: A Field Study of State Sunshine Laws and Institutional Governance. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 77(4)4, 645-683.

Meyer, J. W., & Rowan, B. (1977). Institutionalized organizations: Formal structure as myth and ceremony. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 83(2), 340-363.

Meyerson, D.E. (2003). *Tempered radicals: How people use difference to inspire change at work*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Meyerson, D.E. (2004). The tempered radicals: How employees push their companies—little by little—to be more socially responsible. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Fall 2004, 14-23.

Meyerson, D.E. & Scully, M.A. (1995). Tempered radicalism and the politics of ambivalence and change. *Organization Science*, 6(5), 585-600.

Miles, M.B. (1979). Qualitative data as an attractive nuisance: The problem of analysis. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 24(4), 590-601.

Mowaday, R. (1978). The exercise of upward influence in organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 23(1), 137-156.

Munson, Z. (2010). Mobilizing on campus: Conservative movements and today's college students. *Sociological Forum*, 25(4), 769-786.

Olson, G.A. (July 23, 2009). What exactly is 'shared governance'? *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved September 28, 2020 from https://www-chronicle-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/article/exactly-what-is-shared-governance/.

National Conference of State Legislatures (2019). Tuition benefits for immigrants. Retrieved from: https://www.ncsl.org/research/immigration/tuition-benefits-for-immigrants.aspx.

Neumann, A., & Bensimon, E. M. (1990). Constructing the presidency: College presidents' images of their leadership roles, a comparative study. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 61(6), 678-701.

Peshkin, A. (1988). In search of subjectivity – One's own. *Educational Researcher* 17, 17-21.

Piven, F. F., & Cloward, R. A. (1979). *Poor people's movements: Why they succeed, how they fail* (Vol. 697). Vintage.

Rhoads, R. A. (1998). *Freedom's web: Student activism in the age of cultural diversity.* Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Rojas, F. (2007). *From black power to black studies: How a radical social movement became an academic discipline.* Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Rojas, F. (2011). Social movements and the university. In M. N. Bastedo, *The Organization of Higher Education: Managing Colleges for a New Era* (pp. 256-277). Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Ropers-Huilman, B., Carwile, L., & Barnett, K. (2005). Student activists' characterizations of administors in higher education: Perceptions of power in "the system." *The Review of Higher Education*, 28(3), 295-312.

Rosas, M. (2010). *College student activism: An exploration of learning outcomes*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Iowa]. Retrieved from: https://ir.uiowa.edu/etd/589/.

Ruberg, E. (2020, September 16). Facing legal pressure, graduate students accept University's proposal to end strike. *The Michigan Daily*. Retrieved from: https://www.michigandaily.com/section/academics/geo-strike-general-members-meeting.

Rutherford, A. and Lozano, J. (2016). "Executive Turnover: The Role of Managerial Characteristics and Environmental Factors in Determining Exit Strategy" http://www.chronicle.com/article/Why-University-Chiefs-Head-Out/238369

Santoro, W.A. & McGuire, G.M. (1997). Social movement insiders: The impact of institutional activists on affirmative action and comparable worth policies. *Social Problems*, 44(4), 503-519.

Scott, R.W. & Davis, G.F. (2007). *Organizations and organizing: Rational, natural, and open systems perspective (3rd Ed)*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Schwarz, N. (2007). Retrospective and concurrent self-reports: The rationale for real-time data capture. In the Science of Real-Time Data Capture: Self-Reports in Health Research.

Smerek, R.E. (2009). *Sensemaking and sensegiving: Leadership processes of new college presidents*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan]. Retrieved from deepblue.lib.umich.edu.

Snow, D. A., & Soule, S. A. (2010). *A Primer on Social Movements.* New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Soule, S. A. (1997). The student divestment movement in the United States and tactical diffusion: The shantytown protest. *Social Forces*, 75 (3), 855-882.

Soule, S.A. (2012). Social movements and markets, industries, and firms. *Organization Studies*, 33(12), 1715-1733.

Strauss, V. (May 28, 2020). University of Minnesota limits ties to Minneapolis Police Department after death of George Floyd. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved September 22, 2020 from: https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2020/05/28/university-minnesota-limits-ties-minneapolis-police-department-after-death-george-floyd/.

Sun, J.C., & McClellan, G.S. (2020). *Student clashes on campus: A leadership guide to free speech*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Tarrow, S. (1994). *Power in movement: Social movements, collective action and politics.* New York, NY: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge.

Tarrow, S. (1998). *Power in movement: Social movements and contentious politics (2nd ed.)*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Thomason, A. (May 31, 2020). As George Floyd protests rock U.S. Cities, students and presidents condemn systemic racism. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Retrieved September 24, 2020, from: https://www-chronicle-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/article/As-George-Floyd-Protests-Rock/248888?cid=wcontentlist_hp_latest.

Tierney, W.G. (1989). Symbolism and presidential perceptions of leadership. *The Review of Higher Education*, 12(2), 153-166.

Tilly, C. (1978). *From mobilization to revolution*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co.

Trent, J. W., & Craise, J. L. (1967). Commitment and Conformity in the American College. *Journal of Social Issues*, *23*(3), 34–51.

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), [2018]. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/InstitutionByName.aspx?goToReportId=1.

Useem, B. (1981). Models of the Boston anti-busing movement: Polity/mobilization and relative deprivation. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 22(2), 263-274.

Van Dyke, N. (1998). Hotbeds of activism : Locations of student protest. *Social Problems*, 45(2), 205-220.

Weick, K. (1976). Educational Organizations as loosely coupled systems. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 21: 1-19.

White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities. (2020). HBCU competitiveness strategy: Fiscal years 2020-21 and 2021-22 Agency Competitiveness Plans. Retrieved from: https://sites.ed.gov/whhbcu/files/2021/01/Federal-HBCU-Competitiveness-Strategy.pdf

Wilson, R. (2011, October 2). Syracuse's slide: As chancellor focuses on 'public good,' Syracuse's reputation slides. The Chronicle of Higher Education. Retreieved from: https://www.chronicle.com/article/syracuses-slide/.

Wong, A. (2015, May 21). The renaissance of student activism. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved September 28, 2020 from: https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/05/the-renaissance-of-student-activism/393749/.

Yin, R.K. (1981). The case study crisis: Some answers. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 26(1), 58-65.

Yin, R.K. (1984). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Sage Publications: Beverly Hills, CA.

Yin, R.K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed). Sage Publications: Beverly Hills, CA.

Zald, M.N. (1987). Introduction. In M.N. Zald & J.D. McCarthy (Eds.), *Social movements in an organizational society* (pp. 1-14). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books.

Zald, M.N., & Berger, M.A. (1978). Social movements in organizations: Coup d'etat, insurgency, and mass movements. *American Journal of Sociolog*y, 83(4), 823-861.